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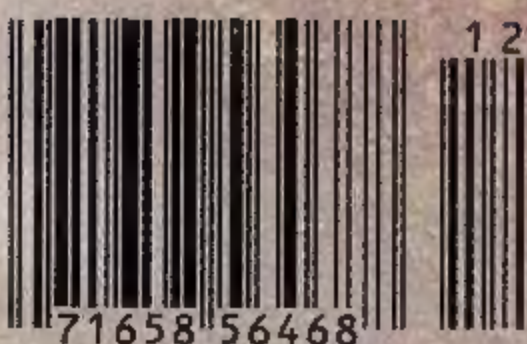
A WARREN MAGAZINE

**The FATE
OF A DOOMED
HUMANKIND
RESTS IN THE
CUMBROUS
HANDS OF A
DEFORMED,
SPASTIC
LITTLE TWIT
IN
The
STARFIRE
SAGA!**



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**The SUBLIME SENSUAL SALACITY OF
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1984

MAGAZINE

NUMBER TEN

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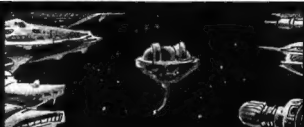
WHATEVER SHOP 6

Need a worm coat? How about a big checkered dinosaur? If it exists in theory, it's on sale at the miraculous little Whatever Shop!



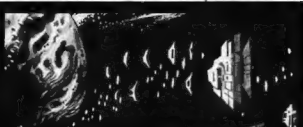
HERMA 18

First the Arab kidnapped her! Then a horde of Mexican banditos had their way with her. Now Herma faces the vile and devious Milton Krebbs!



LITTLE SPACESHIP 26

Can a man-made hunk of metal possess free-will and rational thought? It can if it's a starship with an On-board Rational Thought Processor!



THE KLANKS 33

The Klanks didn't like humans very much. They weren't overly fond of any biological creature. But that wasn't why they destroyed the Earth!



STARFIRE SAGA 43

Becker was dead! And Steamer was on the run. She didn't kill the boy. But no one would believe her, not after they'd learned her secret!



GHITA of ALIZARR 51

Mighty Alizarr had fallen! Ghita and Thene alone escaped the bloody massacre. But the girl would have revenge, once she raised her army!



HAXTUR 63

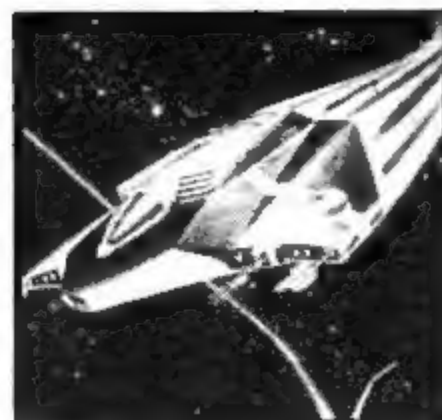
War was not a new experience for Haxtur. He had fought rebels and tyrants before. But never had he battled an army of killer robots!



THINKING OF YOU 74

Cyndie was jealous! She was in love, and she wanted Connell for her very own. But Connell didn't want her. He wasn't overly fond of machines!

incoming telemetry



STORIES LOOKING UP SINCE EARLY DAYS!

When I first heard that Warren was publishing a new magazine (some two years ago, now), I was overjoyed. I eagerly awaited the coming of 1984. But I must say that I was sadly disappointed when the magazine made its inauspicious debut.

I found it to be a periodical crammed with tasteless sex, and sick humor, which was generally far below Warren Publishing's usually-high standards. Predictably, I began to pass 1984 over at the newsstands.

On impulse, however, I bought #8, and was pleasantly surprised to find several truly interesting and intriguing stories. Aside from Ghita, 1984's rather silly imitation of Marvel's Red Sonja, my faith in Warren was completely restored.

After happily buying issue #9, I was ecstatic to find that the proceeding number wasn't simply a fluke of good taste, but was proof positive of an upward trend.

1984 #9 started out wonderfully with "Break Even." But I was less than delighted with Herma, Rex Havoc and "The Schmoo Connection," which were amusing, but not really worth much. "The Starfire Saga," however, more than made up for any other story's lack of finesse. I simply can't wait for the next installment.

As long as you continue to produce fine science fiction such as this, unencumbered by tasteless and unnecessary sex, I'll be a 1984 fan for life!

CHRIS SUMPTER
Leander, Texas

HERMA: EPIITOME OF SEXUALITY!

Personally, I think 1984 is very erotic. There should be more magazines like it.

I especially like the Herma series. There is nothing more sexually stimulating than watching two women getting it on! When you get right down to it, men would rather see flagrantly healthy tit-bumping than two jerks popping each other off with lasers. (We won't comment on the sexual allusions in that one!)

So keep Herma coming, so to speak. Have her getting down with more of her female lovers! It's a far out stuff!

RONALD WAITE
Bronx, N.Y.



My like or dislike of Herma and similar sexually-provocative stories in 1984, neither defines me as a pervert or a puritan. I enjoy Herma because of its well-written, thought-provoking nuances as well as its more-than ample display of feminine erotica. The human body is indeed beautiful; and that more than all else is the prevalent theme within the Herma series.

I neither condone nor condemn pornography. If one wants raw, rampant sex, one has only to pick up the girl next door or the latest issue of *Water Sports Monthly*. 1984 is not pornography. It labels itself as "Provocative, Illustrated Adult Fantasy!" I see that as a straightforward, accurate definition.

And them's what don't like it, don't have to buy it!

CHRIS KEACH
Secaucus, N.J.

If succeeding installments are as entertaining as the first two, I hope Herma lives a long, long time!

TIMOTHY DYR
Belvidere, N.J.

Alas, Timmy! Within this very issue, fate perpetrates a vile jest upon our heroine, forcing her to live happily ever-after, thus bringing to a close her exciting adventures!

GIVE HAPPY JIM CORBEN TREATMENT!

I have a suggestion which I think would be a lot of fun. How about having Richard Corben illustrate an eight-page vignette starring none other than that happy go-lucky huckster of the spaceways, Happy Jim Sunblaster? Think about it. Happy Jim has a universe of potential.

MARC TESSIER
Drummondville, Quebec

CAN A MAGAZINE BE SCHIZOPHRENIC?

I don't know, people. I just don't know. On one hand, 1984 has seen publication of some of the most original and thought-provoking material ever printed in comics, either from Warren or anyone else. On the other, it has been home to some of the silliest, most puerile trash imaginable. The ninth issue of the magazine continues this schizophrenic trend.

First, we have "Break Even"... without reservation, the finest story yet to appear in 1984. Kevin Duane has shown what can be done with a real science fiction concept. See? You don't need meaningless violence, adolescent sex, ethnic slurs, or pulp-magazine monsters. All you need is an idea! That, coupled with the greatest art possible (Alex Nino in top form; and with an airbrush yet!), and you've got something to be proud of. Maybe this is the beginning of a new trend. After all, stories can be written for readers with IQs higher than 0.00014!

"Herma:" Maybe if I ignore her, she'll go away.

"A Clear and Present Danger" presented a competent script by Gerry Boudreau and beautiful art by Jess Jodloman. While interesting, it suffers from the same problem that is the downfall of most time-travel stories. I refer to variation 3-B of the infamous "grandfather paradox." In other words, had the protagonist succeeded in changing history, he would have lost both his reason and opportunity to travel to the past in the first place; therefore his not doing what he did would insure that the antagonist would be affected!

As for "The Starfire Saga," I really can't say very much. This installment is merely an introduction to the series, and doesn't tell us a lot.

Perhaps we can't have Frank Thorne and Ghita of Alizarr every issue (much as I would like!), but Rex Havoc is not an acceptable substitute. "Humungus" is as boring and unfunny as the other stories in the series have been. Twenty whole pages are wasted on this nonsense. For this a tree was killed?

So there you have it! A mixed bag... or, rather, a typical issue of 1984.

BRIAN CADEN
Cincinnati, Ohio

1984 TOO ADULTS FOR COMIC FANS?

I've got to admit that I've never read of an issue of 1984 from cover-to-cover. The prohibitive factor is, more often than not, artwork which is unsuited for readable storytelling.

An example of this is Abel Laxamana's art. Laxamana's figures usually loom much too large within each of his panels. He thus loses a spontaneous pacing which is achieved by smaller, more dynamic and complete figures.

Another drawback which deters me from reading all that is published, is the **overwritten** quality of many stories. Again, this could be alleviated by authors exercising more concern for an artist's abilities. Better placement of word balloons within each panel, might also help.

I will say that the letters pages in 1984 are the most unique and readable published anywhere. Readers are allowed to say whatever they wish, employing even the most blatant vulgarities if they so desire. About the only topics everyone seems to agree on, however, are the unlimited extent of Richard Corben's artistic tal-



ents, and the continually-stated alleged perversity of your editor.

But then, comic fans are notorious prudes. I find this also true of comic book dealers... most of whom are or were one-time fans anyway. It is untrue, however, of many comic book creators.

In today's prevailing big brother atmosphere, dealers continually "watch out" for their patrons, who tend always to be much younger than themselves and predictably male. The patrons, like the comic book dealers themselves, will give you no argument against bloody barbarians slaying one another, werewolves eating human flesh, emotionally-void space soldiers vaporizing living

creatures, horrific pits and pendulums or super villains devastating entire galaxies! Yet, any intimation of **sexuality** is obstinately condemned!

I imagine this, because people who become comic book collectors and dealers are usually introduced to comics during their pre-pubescent years. The enthrallment with comics throughout their lifetime is a glaring confirmation of their own **nonsexuality**. I can say that, with very few exceptions, every person I have ever met who collects comic books, is incapable of a normal sexual relationship, to say nothing of an emotional involvement within the confines of normal male/female consanguinity. Comic book readers are spastics, retards, introverts and rejects.

Is it any wonder then that readers of 1984, which is still essentially a comic book for those overgrown, sexually illiterate "children," are outraged by the implicit sexual nature of the magazine?

"Normal" readers of Warren, Marvel, National and other comics, look forward to stories of death, destruction and pseudo-sado costumed-masochism. 1984 is disappointing them. All it features is vividly graphic S-E-X!

RONN SUTTON
Toronto, Ontario

Send letters to: 1984 Magazine, Warren Publishing, 145 E. 32nd Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10016.

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It was neither the forces of darkness nor the long arm of circumstance that brought Delbert Honeybutter to the ghastly little shop on a secluded side street in downtown Los Angeles. It was his popcorn popper.

After six years of unfailing service, the popper (a wedding gift from Delbert's appalling brother-in-law, but that's another story) suddenly gave an awful groan, staggered clear across to the other end of the table, and expired.

Next day, Delbert Honeybutter appeared at the address listed on the warranty.

The Whatever Shop!

Ygg! What a place!

But the address is right. So I guess it is the place!

If It Exists In Theory. We Sell It.

Bargain!

Cheap!

COLA

UNIVERSAL TRUCE





Er, well... it's this popcorn popper... It threw a shoe last night and came up lame. I have this repair warranty, but I dunno, maybe it's time to buy another one.

My wife and I can't watch television without our popcorn. It's a sacred ritual for us. Can you do anything?



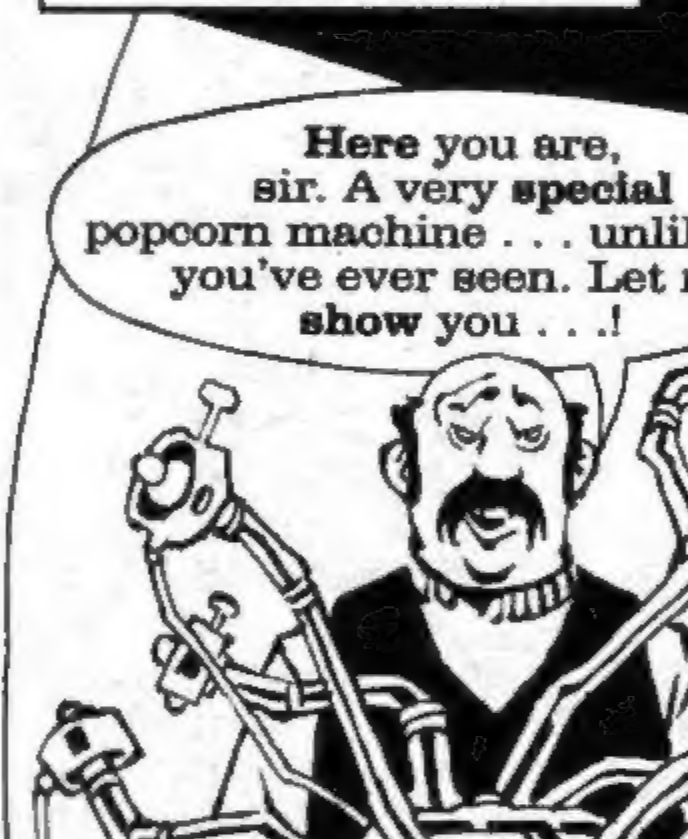
I'm afraid, sir, this warranty applies to a previous owner, when this shop was an appliance store.

But I do happen to have a popcorn machine in the back room I can sell you for five dollars, if you don't mind buying a used one.



Five dollars? Great! I'd prefer an already broken-in model anyway!

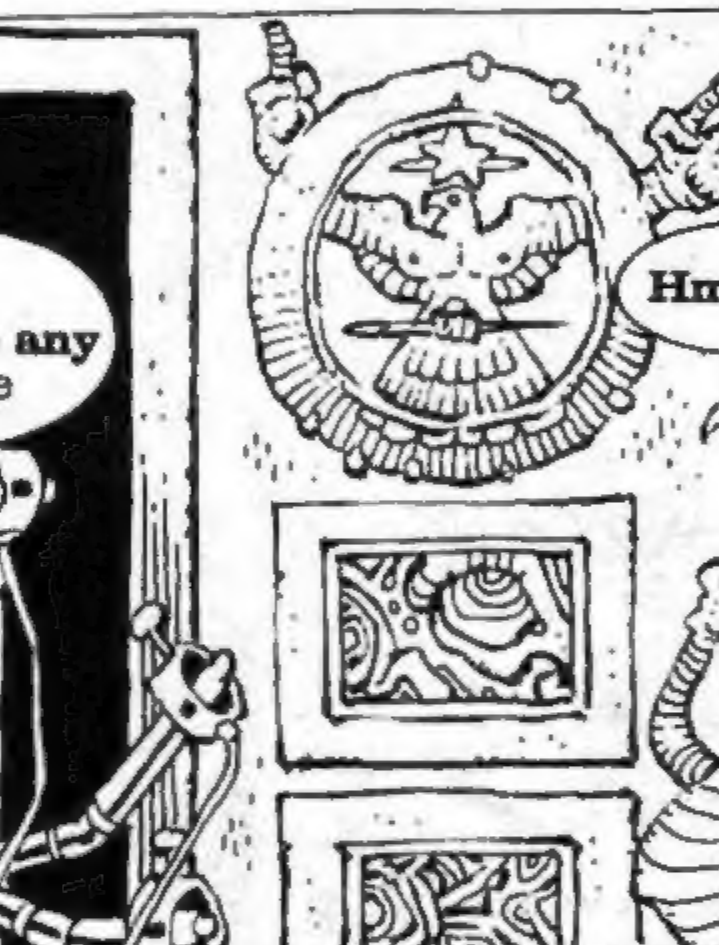
Some minutes later...



Here you are, sir. A very special popcorn machine... unlike any you've ever seen. Let me show you...



See? Clean, energy-efficient, and simple-to-operate. This machine can make bushels of popcorn from a single kernel of corn, and it makes its own butter and salt, right inside!



Hmmm!



That's terrific! What else do you have back there?



Back where? Behind the curtain!

All the very best things you have seem to come from that back room, so I was wondering...

What are you looking for, sir?

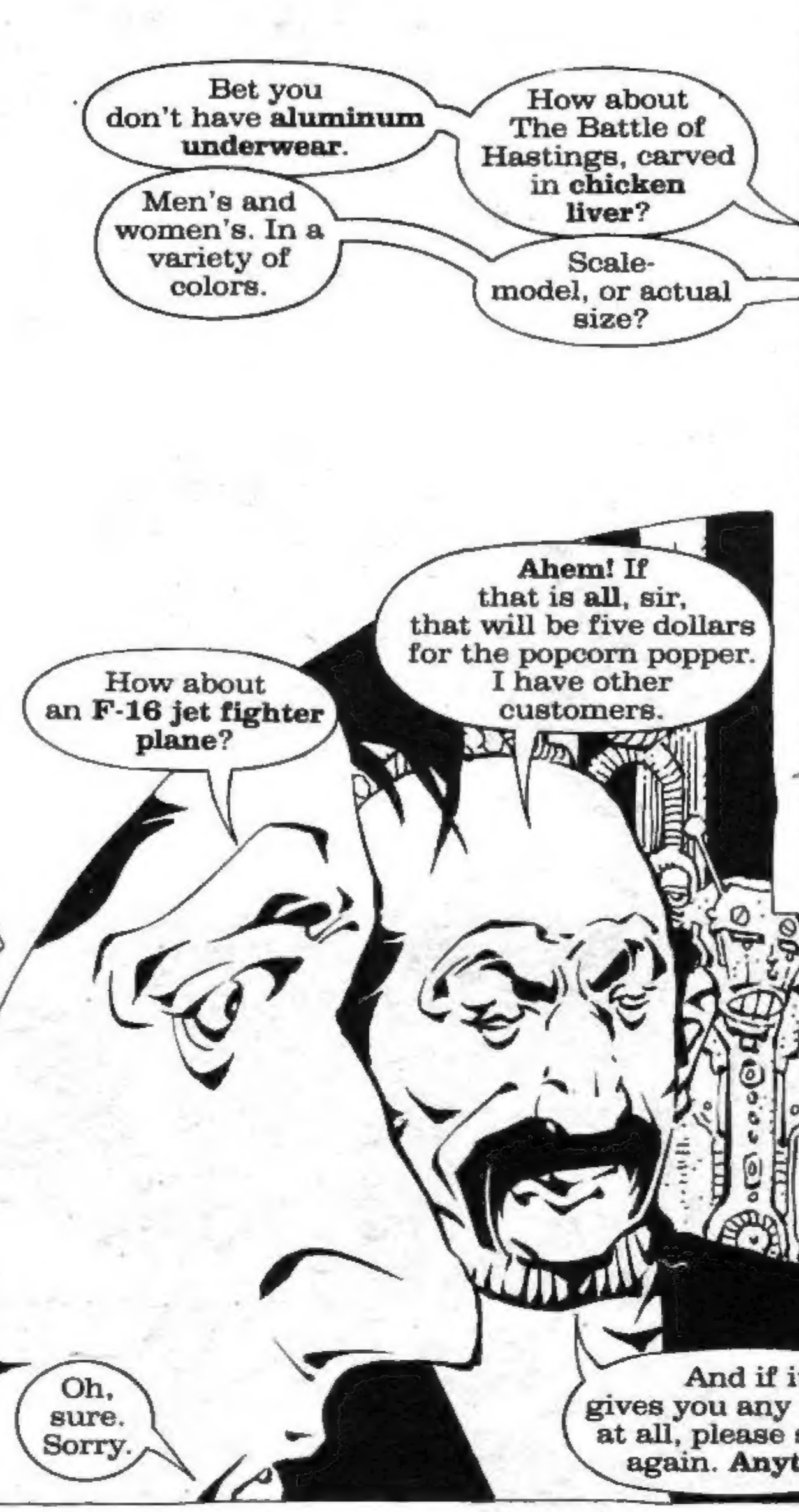


Well, if I could see what you had...

Sorry, sir. Strictly against the rules to go back there.

As I said, sir... everything. Absolutely anything you want, as long as you have the money to pay for it.

Anything?!



Bet you don't have aluminum underwear.

Men's and women's. In a variety of colors.

How about an F-16 jet fighter plane?

Oh, sure. Sorry.

How about The Battle of Hastings, carved in chicken liver?

Scale-model, or actual size?

Ahem! If that is all, sir, that will be five dollars for the popcorn popper. I have other customers.

And if it gives you any trouble at all, please stop in again. Anytime.



A checkered brontosaurus? Mink billiard balls? A man-eating pizza?

Yes, yes, yes! We have all that stuff. Just tell me what it is you want!



I sure will. Thanks.

Er... Hello!

Capitalist running dog!

Yankee pig!

Shocking manners.



Later, as Delbert and his wife prepare for an evening of television...

Here's the kernel. But where're the bushels of popcorn?

I can't understand it. I hear something working inside, but it's not doing anything.



Face it, Delbert, you've been gypped. Whoever heard of a machine making popcorn from just one kernel?

You go right back to that place and get a regular popper. And be quick about it—our TV shows are coming on.

But, back at the shop...!

Drat! Closed. And Isadora will brain me if I don't bring back some sort of working machine.

PRIVATE AUCTION!

Sigh! What a disappointment. I bet he doesn't have aluminum underwear after all.

Hullo-o! Mister Zoo-ook. Anyone here?

What am I bid, then, for this Super-Corporeal Radiation Gun, which, in the hands of the most deserving government, can turn the blood of his enemies into furniture polish...?

Claw... now I need an Anti-Cellular Cohesion Rocket Launcher.

Any special make?

Whatever's handiest.

Twelve million yaun!!

Twenty million rubles!!

Two million American dollars... Cash!!

Sold to the brothers Ahmad!

Say! That's some gadget you've got there. Does it compact trash, too?

Here you go!

Gaaaa! What are you doing here? This is a Private auction! The public is not invited! Get out! GET OUT!!

Am sorry, Mr. Zook. Am thought was made clear to you our business was to be in privacy. But now, with every Boris, Sergius and Vladimir come bursting in here...!

It's only a customer! Nothing to be concerned about, I assure you. Just give me a moment to exchange this machine, and I'll get rid of him.

Go on! Get out and stay out! And if you come snooping around here again, I'll have you arrested for trespassing!

But Mr. Zook! This popcorn machine you sold me...! it isn't working!

A little. Did I hurt something?

Let me see that! This isn't a popcorn machine...! This is a machine that prevents the swallows from flying back to Capistrano. They look so much alike. You didn't run it, did you?

Probably not. Stay here. I'll get another one.

Gaaaa! Gentlemen, you're not leaving already? The auction has hardly begun.

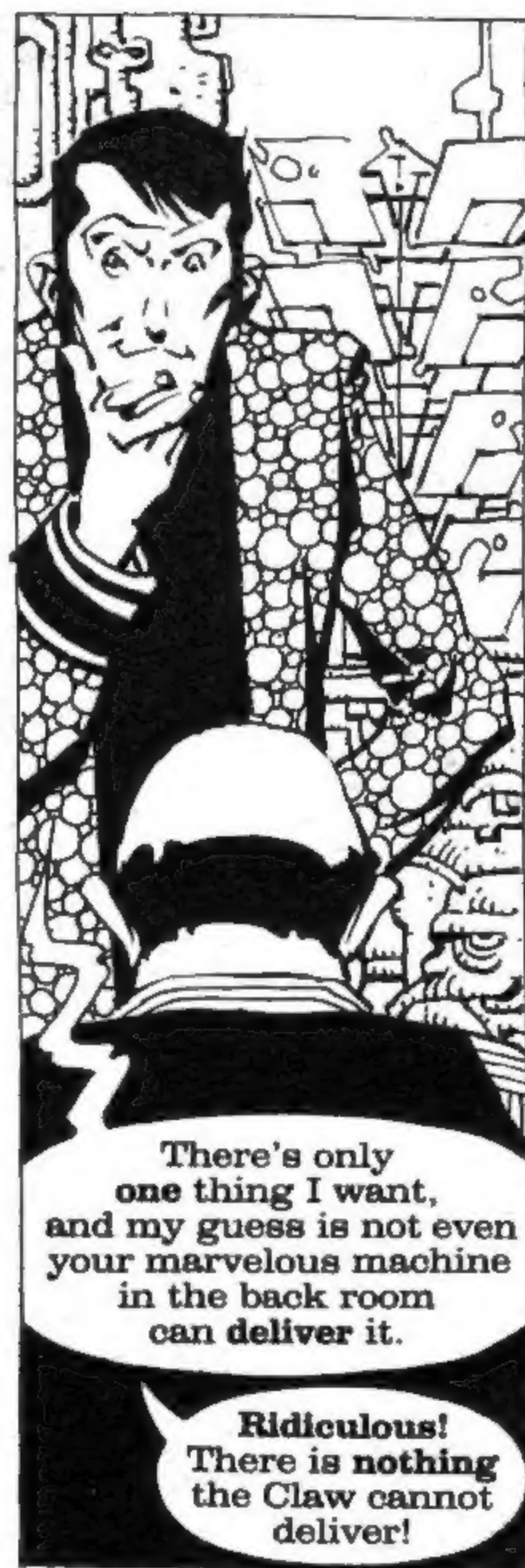
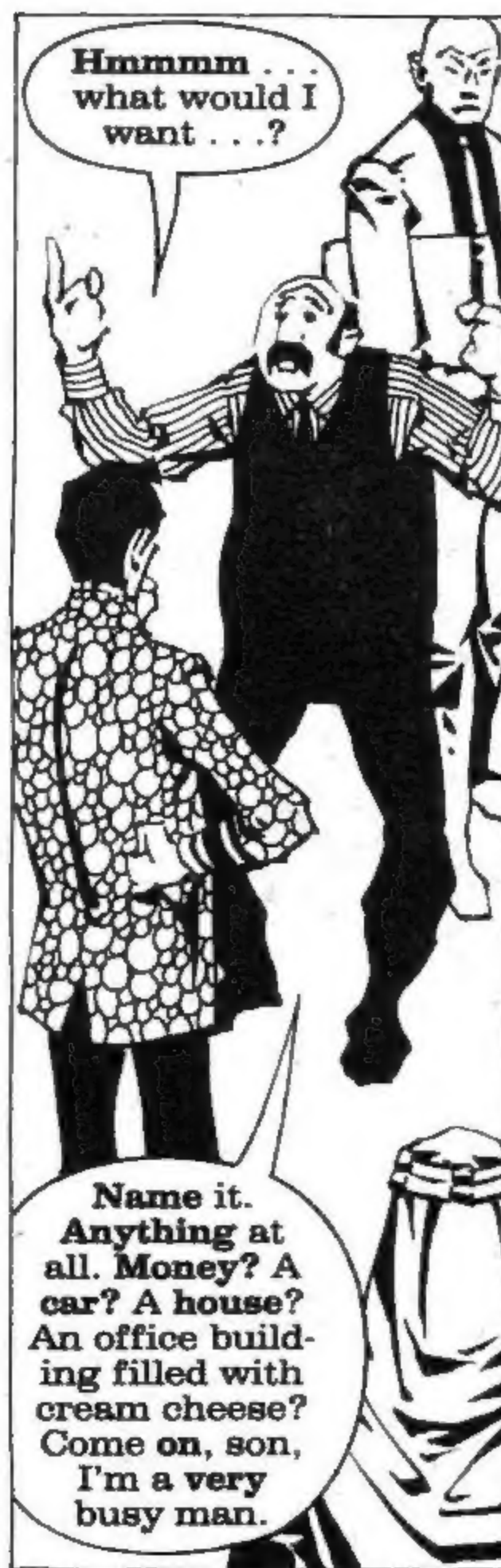
Well... perhaps my brother and I will stay...

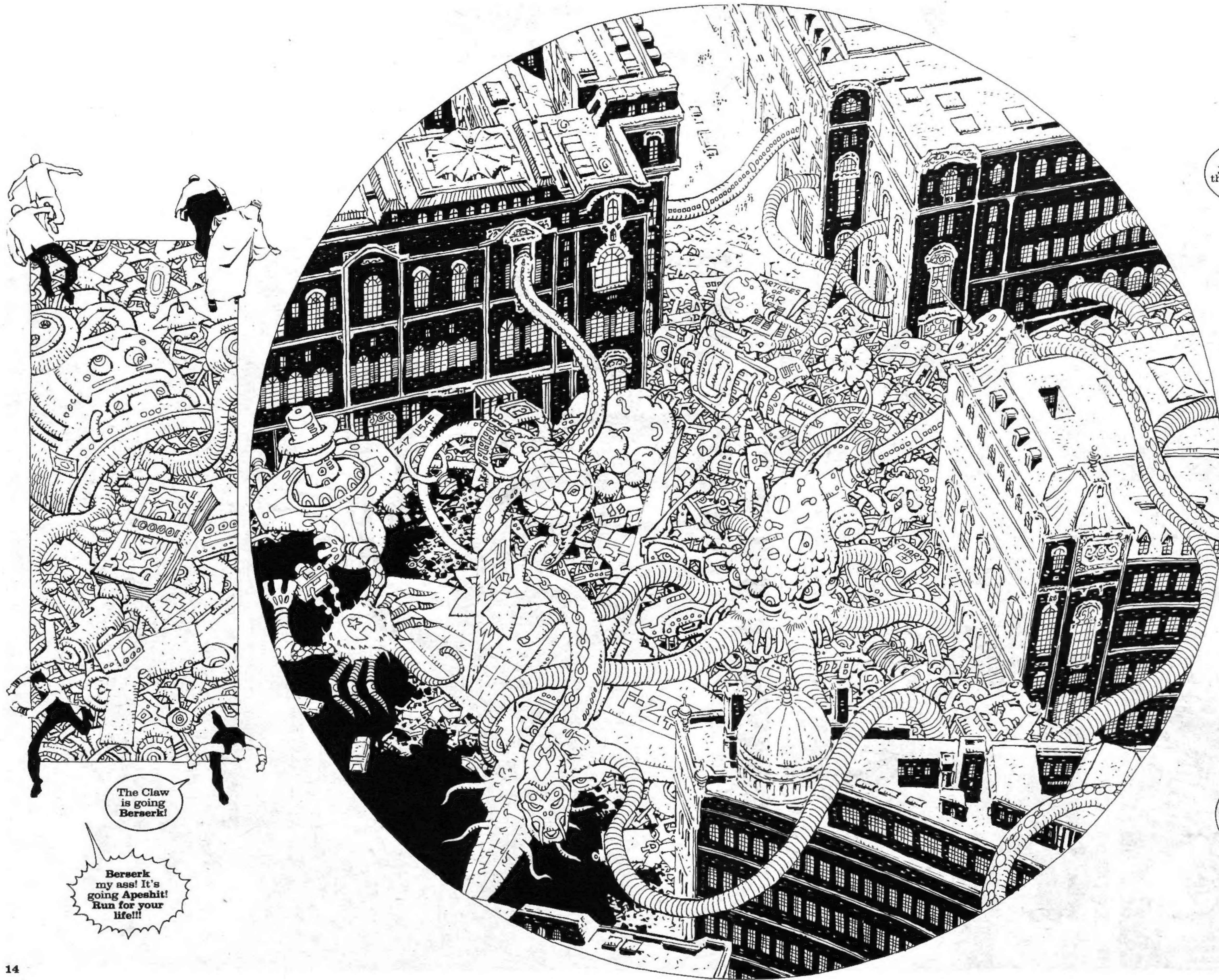
I protest, Mr. Zook! It isn't fair that two men can bid from the same country! These sheiks can combine their money and outbid us on all the best arms!

Arms? Arms?? Is that what you're doing here, Mr. Zook? Selling Weapons to other countries?

No! No! Mr. Weng is from the amputee hospital in China. He's here to buy artificial arms!

Oh, Mr. Zook. I'm afraid I'll have to call the FBI in on this. And the CIA, too.





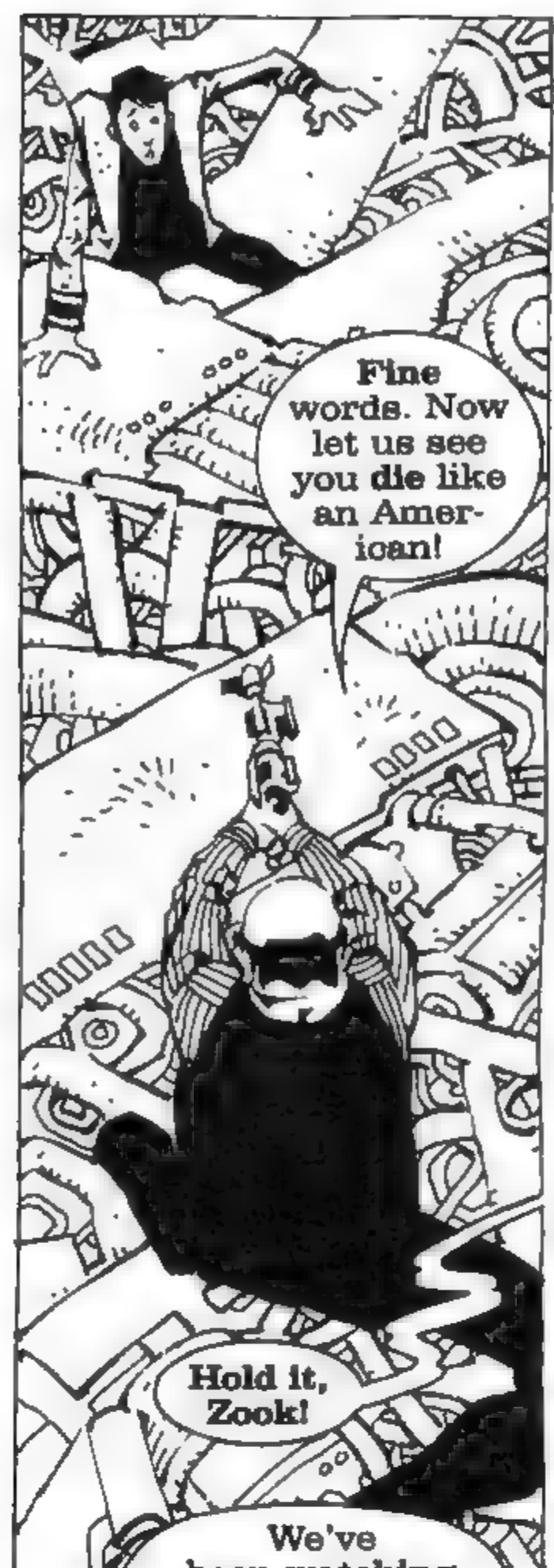
The Claw
is going
Berserk!

Berserk
my ass! It's
going Ape shit!
Run for your
life!!!

Imbecile! Colossal
idiot! You could have had anything
you wanted! Yet, you asked for the one
thing you knew was utterly unobtainable
... The sweetheart of the year!
Why did you do it? Why!!?



Because you
were going to sell
advanced weaponry to countries
who might use them irresponsibly! And
for whatever its faults, this is
my country, and I am first
and foremost, an
American!



Fine words. Now let us see you die like an American!

Hold it, Zook!

We've been watching Zook ever since he set up shop here in the third dimension!



But we have only you to thank for busting up his operation.

There's a fat reward for his capture... a quattuordecillion dollars.



Wha-?! I-I...

Wh-Wha-a-??

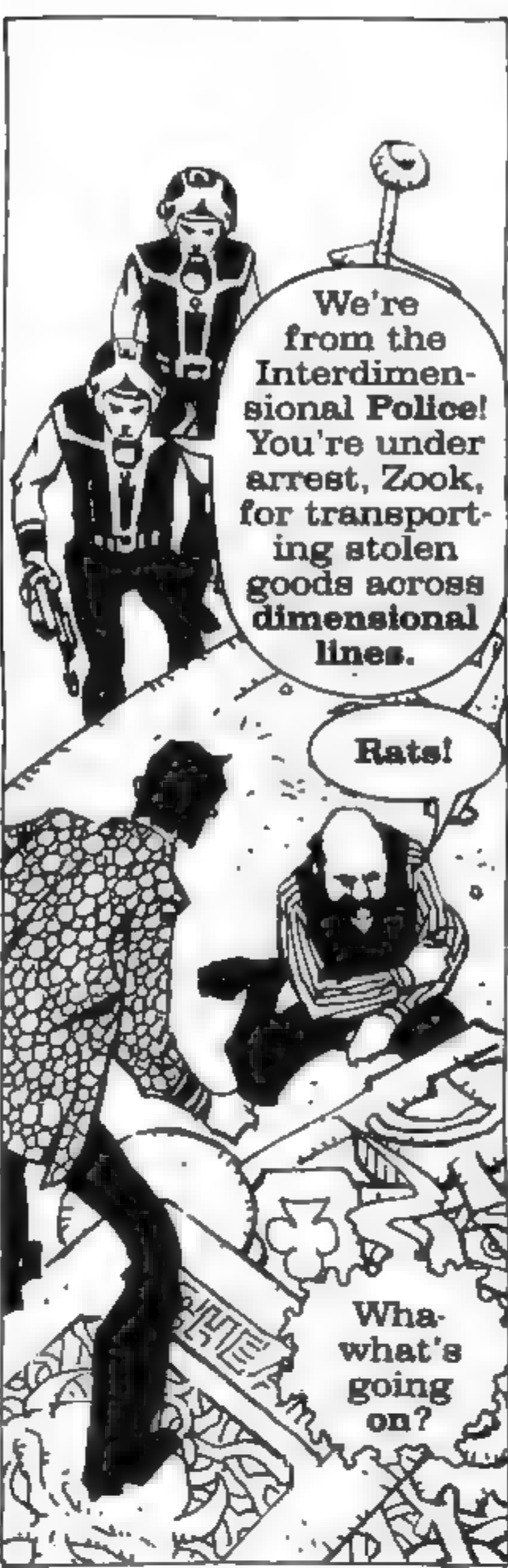


Oh, thanks... but that isn't necessary...

Here's what I'm looking for!

A popcorn machine?

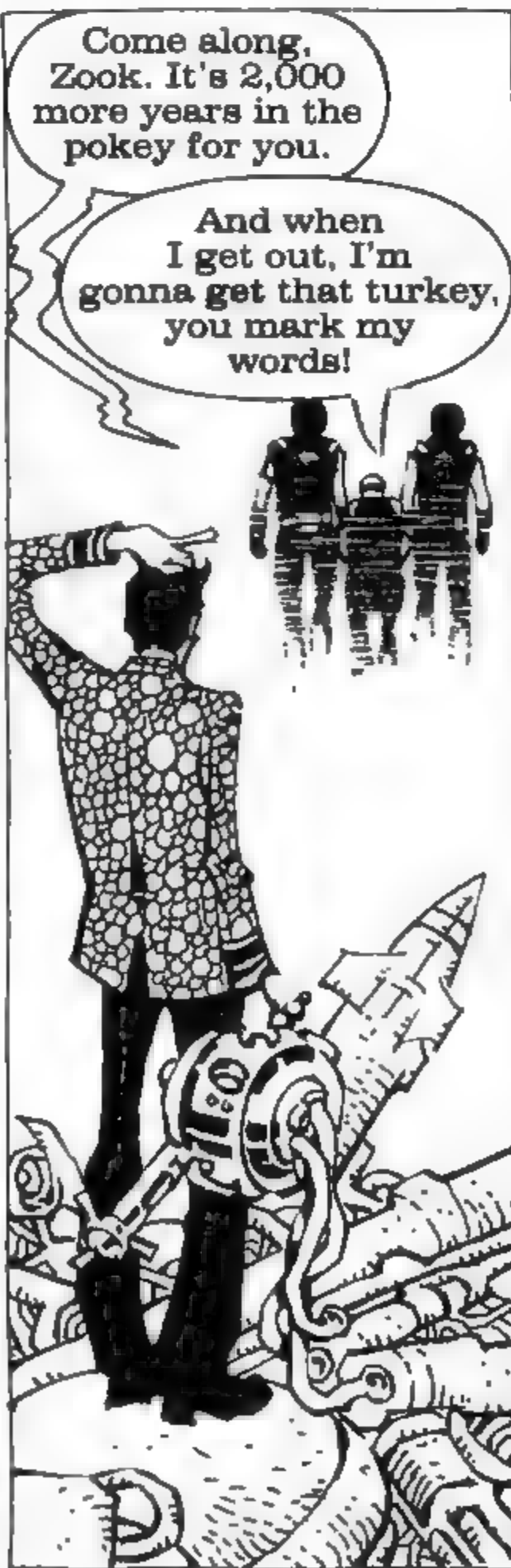
Wife won't let me back in the house without it.



We're from the Interdimensional Police! You're under arrest, Zook, for transporting stolen goods across dimensional lines.

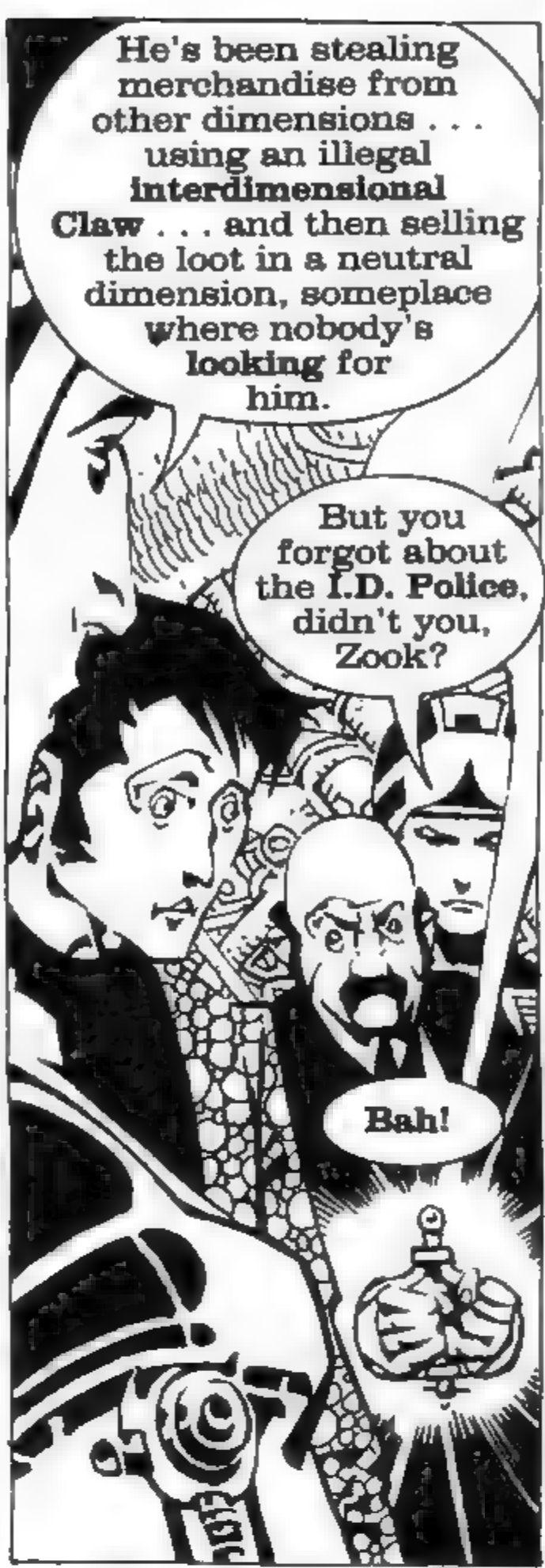
Rats!

Wha-what's going on?



Come along, Zook. It's 2,000 more years in the pokey for you.

And when I get out, I'm gonna get that turkey, you mark my words!



He's been stealing merchandise from other dimensions... using an illegal interdimensional Claw... and then selling the loot in a neutral dimension, someplace where nobody's looking for him.

But you forgot about the I.D. Police, didn't you, Zook?

Bah!



And so...!
More popcorn, my dear?

If you would be so kind.

An extraordinary item from San Juan Capistrano today...!



The annual migratory return of the swallows to Capistrano has reached an unexpected conclusion. The swallows, which were expected to fly back here this morning, have started arriving late this afternoon... walking!

That's what I said, ladies and gentlemen walking back to this aged Spanish mission.

No one is able to say why the birds have chosen this irregular mode of travel to return. But it is impossible not to notice the stubborn deliberation of their steps, the grim determination on their little bird faces...!

Stout little beggars.

And such tiny feet!

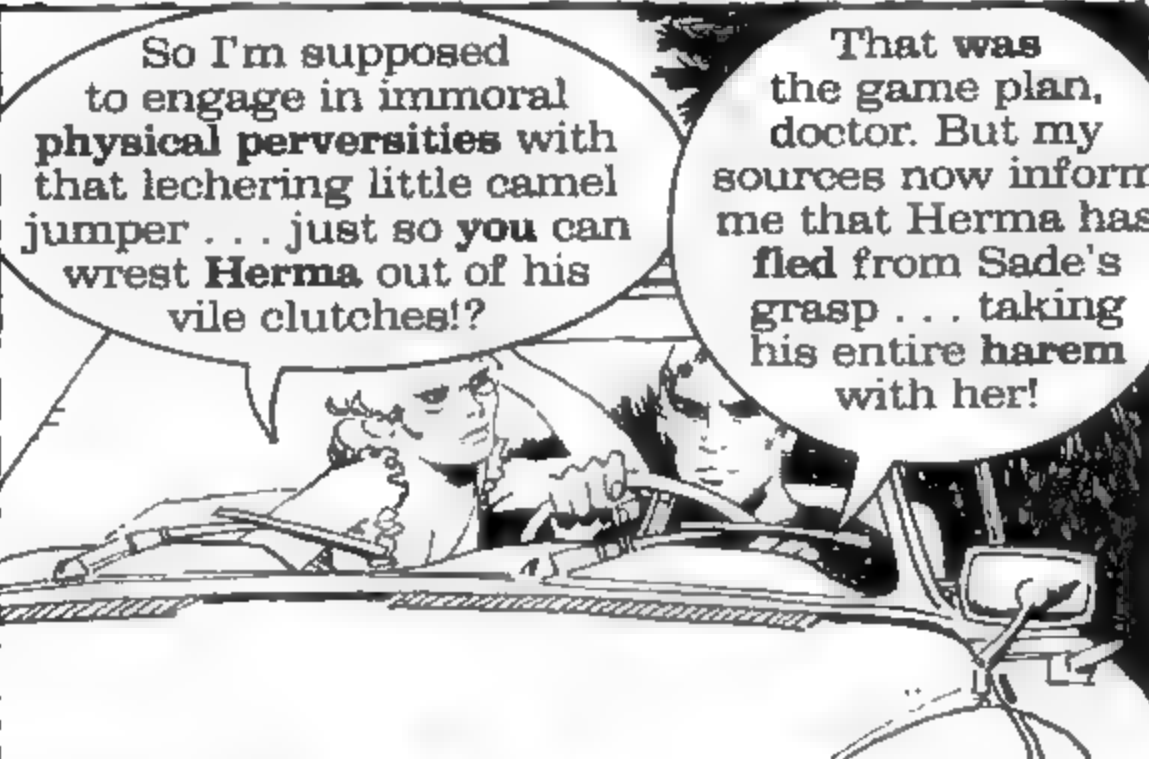
Her name is Herma, sans finale nom de plume. And, quite simply, she is one of history's most tragic victims. Freeze-dried by a runaway glacier more than one thousand years ago, she was "unearthed" by the famous Draftstree-Battlesberry expedition of '84. Enjoying instant fame for all of fifteen seconds, her career as a professional archaeological artifact was cut short by a lust-crazed Arab, a horde of sex-starved banditos, a small but insatiable band of licentious Federales, and an endless stream of lascivious lechers in Madame Warden's home for wayward girls.



M-M-Mother wants a f-f-five year exclusive, angel.

Says sh-sh-she won't take n-n-no for an answer!

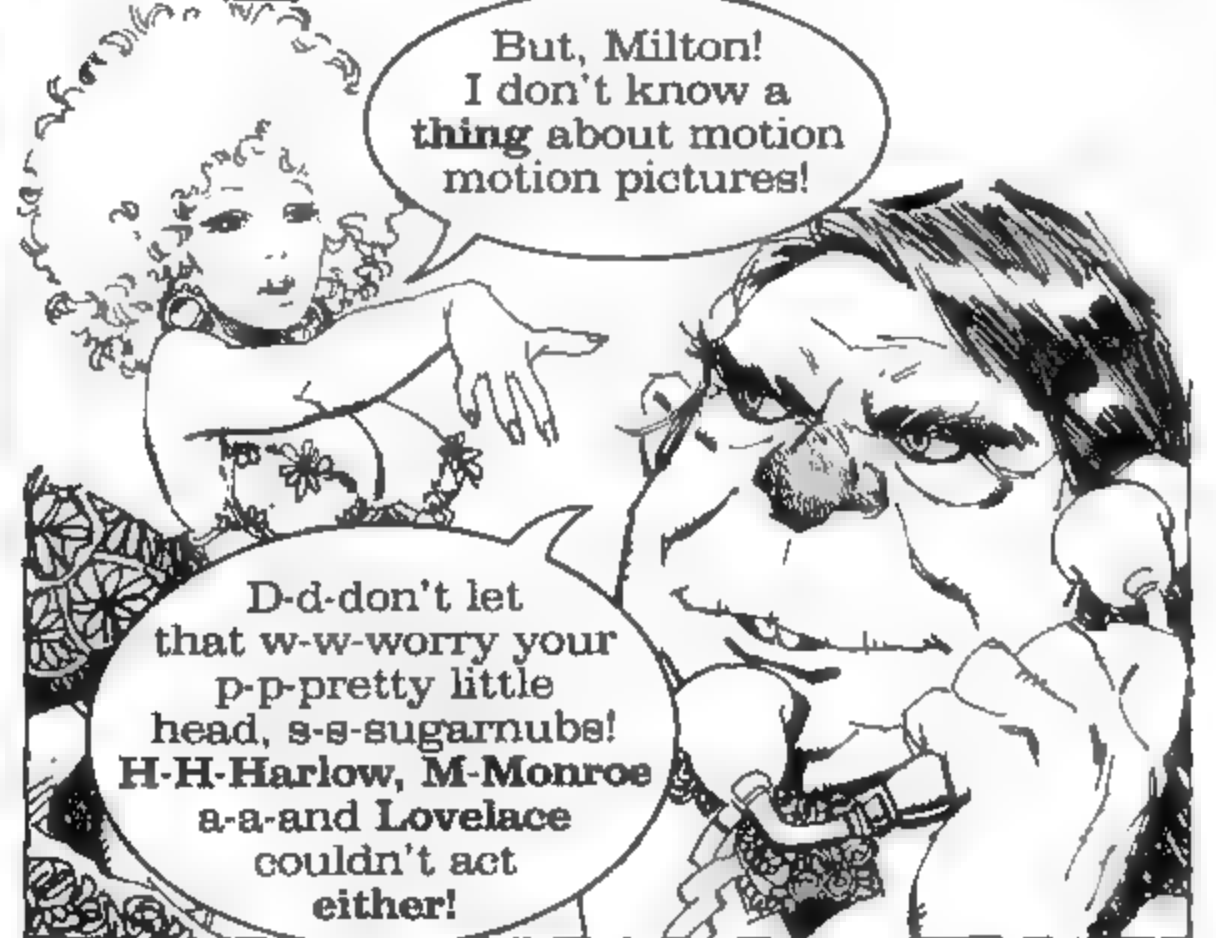
Her name is Dr. Cherry Pitts, eminent archaeological gastropodologist, co-discoverer, along with Professor Sir Robert Draftstree-Battlesberry, of the miraculously well-preserved (for a thousand-plus-year-old Valkyrie) Herma the Bold. He, on the other hand, is Sir Richard Bolt, of Her Majesty's Secret Service, recently assigned the delicate and almost-impossible task of locating the national treasure (Herma) who was so unceremoniously requisitioned by Ali Khan Sade, prodigious collector of nubial perfection!



So I'm supposed to engage in immoral physical perversities with that lecherous little camel jumper . . . just so you can wrest Herma out of his vile clutches?

That was the game plan, doctor. But my sources now inform me that Herma has fled from Sade's grasp . . . taking his entire harem with her!

HERMA



But, Milton! I don't know a thing about motion motion pictures!

D-d-don't let that w-w-worry your p-p-pretty little head, s-s-sugarnubs! H-H-Harlow, M-Monroe a-a-and Lovelace couldn't act either!

Regrettably, it is so, Mr. Bolt. Due to an inexcusable series of catastrophic jests perpetrated by the mirthsome gods of fate, your contriving "national treasure" injudiciously absconded with all thirty-two of my former wives. . . !

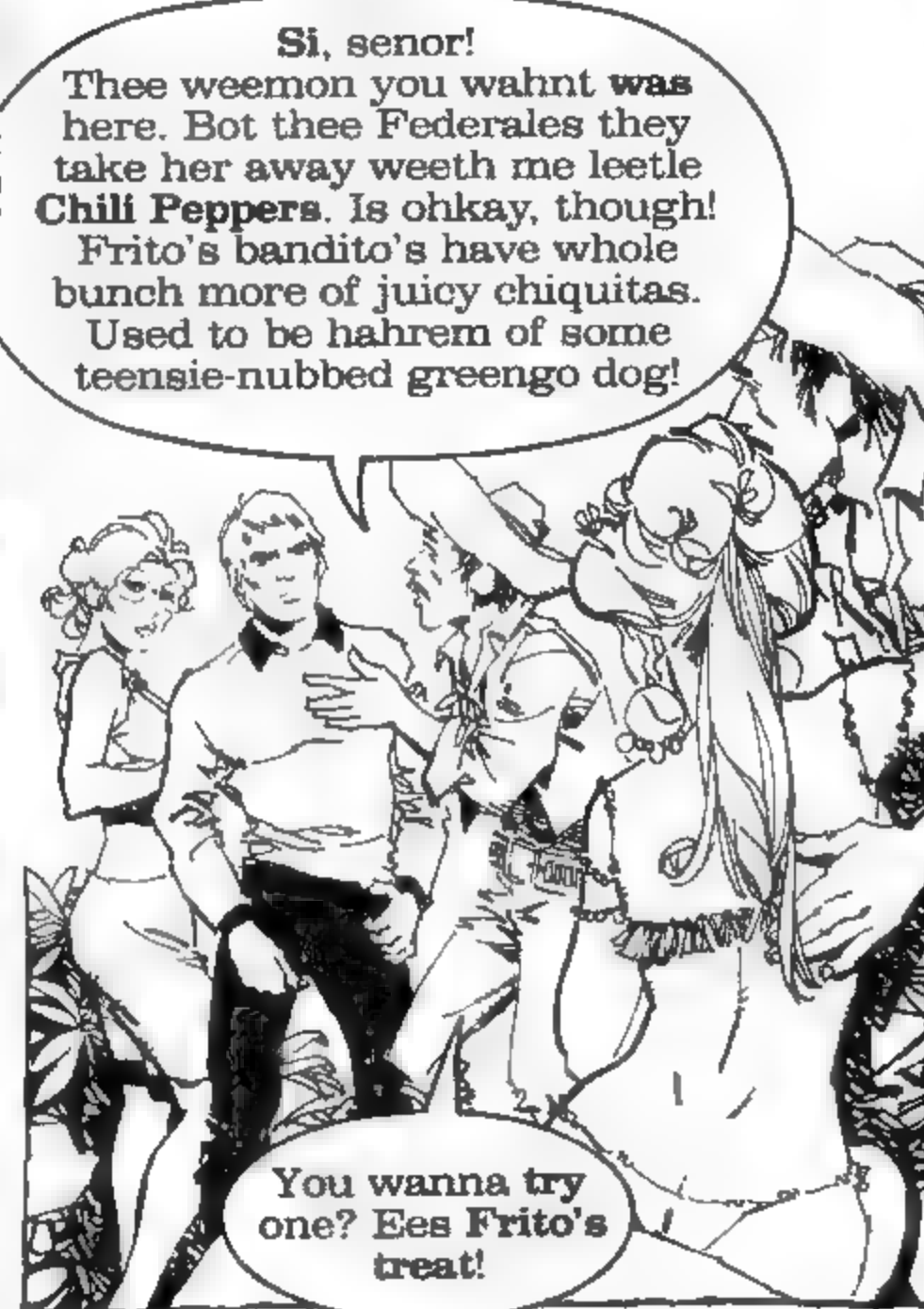
Fortunately, my rampant masculine charms, coupled with my celebrated inestimable wealth, have allowed me to woo and win an even more lubricious assortment of pulchritudinal voluptuaries!



Poor Herma! No wonder she didn't want to become the next Mrs. Ali Khan Sade. That limp-limbed dildo has all the charisma of a mashed camel turd!

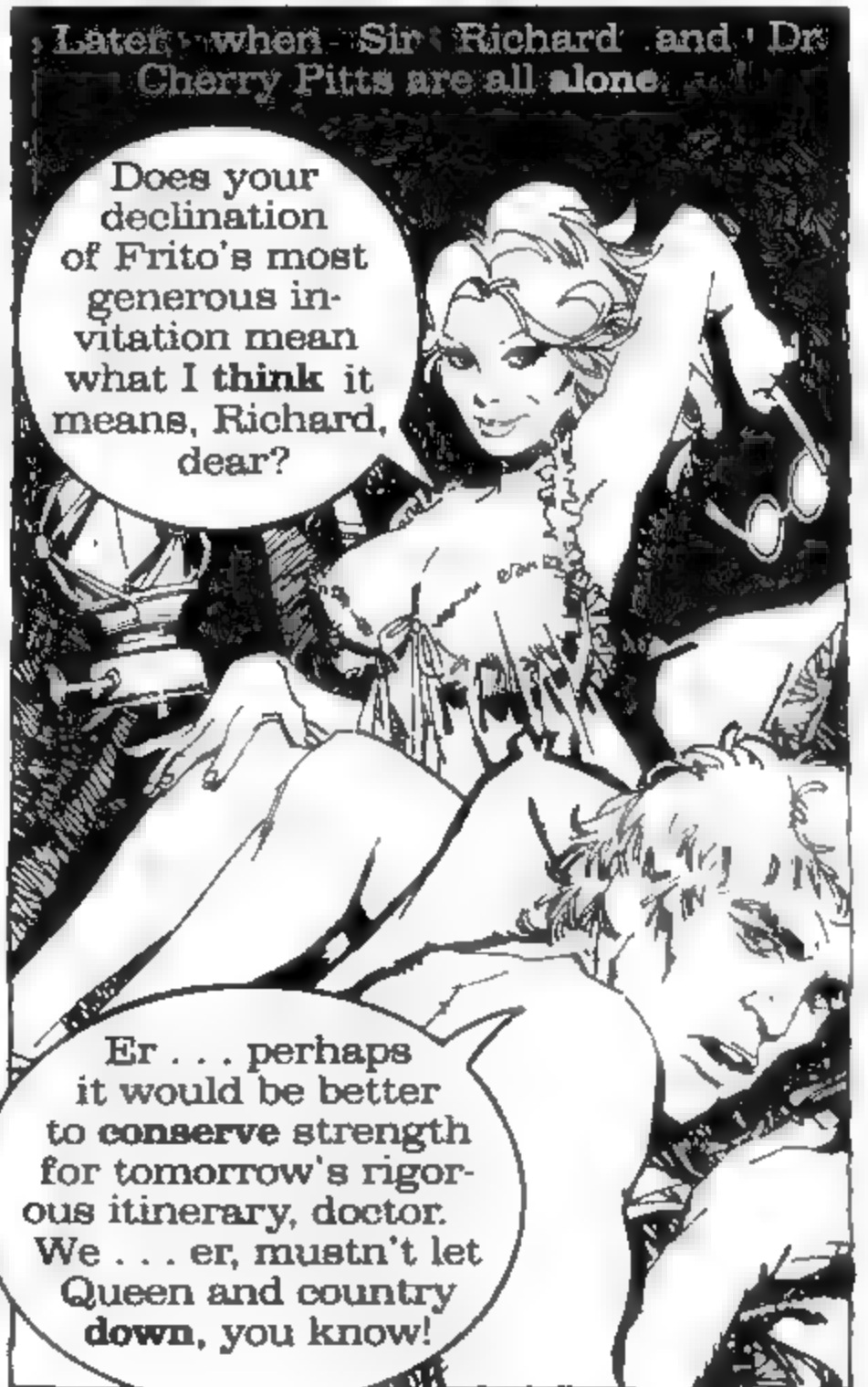
Nonetheless, he did tell us what we needed to know. Herma headed due west! Given the fuel range of her aircraft, that would put her somewhere in the middle of Mexico's Via Con Dios desert!

Shortly, within the infamous South-of-the-border wasteland. . . !



Si, senior! Thee weemon you wahnt was here. Bot thee Federales they take her away weeth me leetle Chili Peppers. Is ohkay, though! Frito's bandito's have whole bunch more of juicy chiquitas. Used to be hahrem of some teensie-nubbed greengo dog!

You wanna try one? Ees Frito's treat!



Later, when Sir Richard and Dr. Cherry Pitts are all alone.

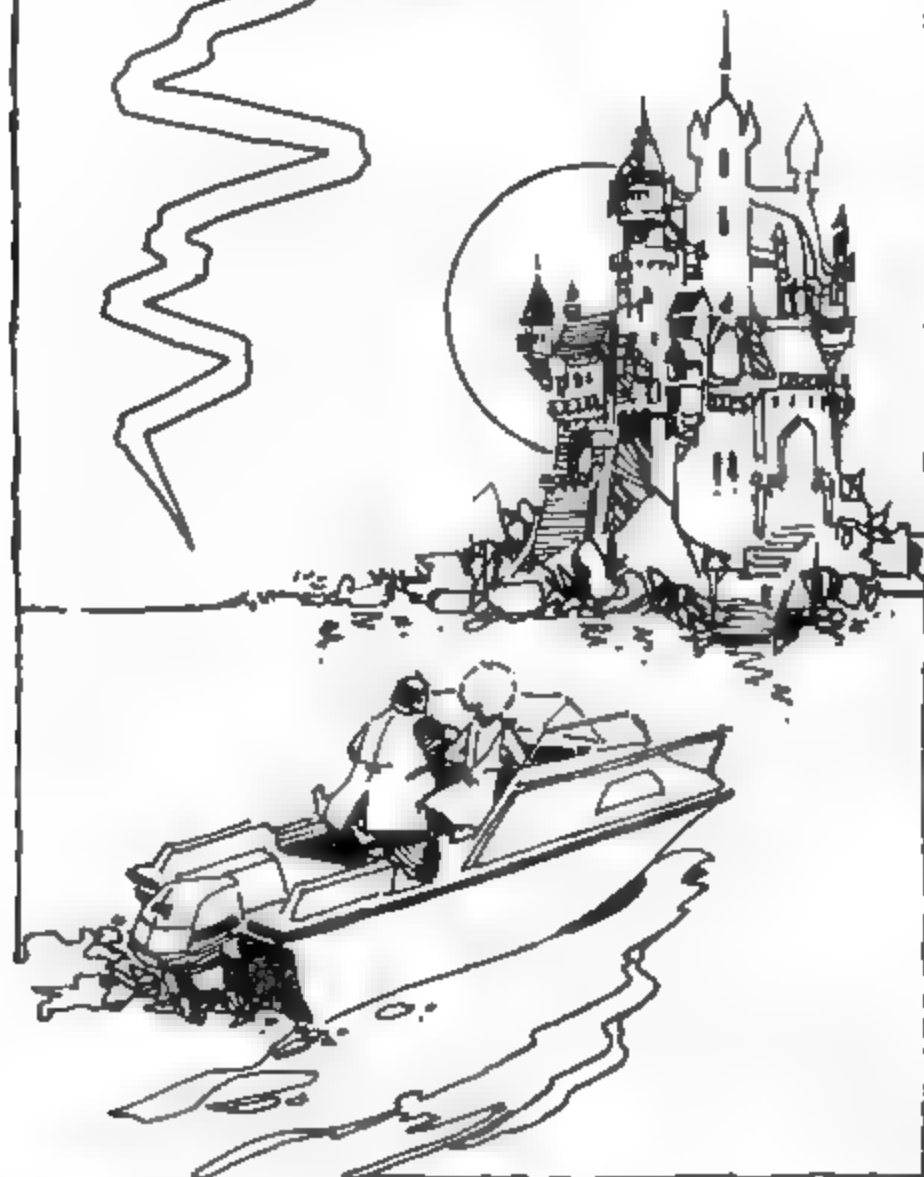
Does your declination of Frito's most generous invitation mean what I think it means, Richard, dear?

Er . . . perhaps it would be better to conserve strength for tomorrow's rigorous itinerary, doctor. We . . . er, mustn't let Queen and country down, you know!

A delicate mist of warm salt sea spray caresses the Norse goddess' willing skin. Like a considerate lover, it arouses her to ecliptical heights of euphoric passion.

Within her reverie, she is only peripherally aware that she is being steered towards an ominous stone edifice jutting from the penumbral isolation of the rock-littered seascape.

There she is, sweetnubs! Castle Kragnurok! Backdrop for mother's newest epic: "Dungeons and Black Lace!"

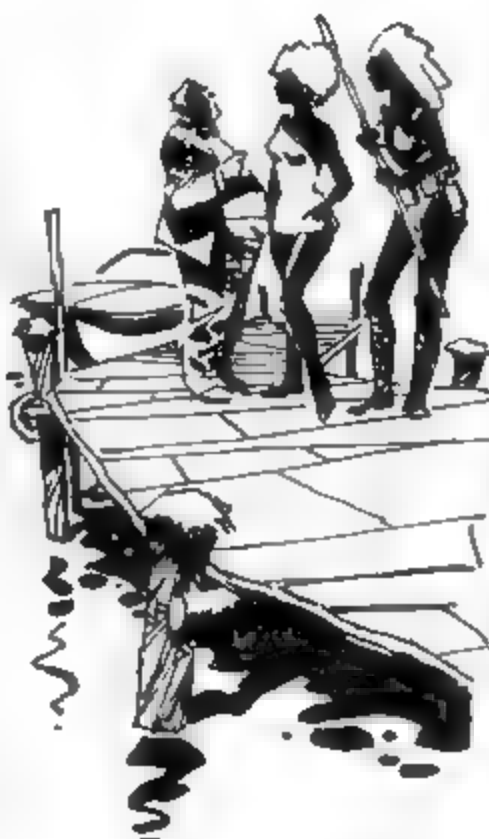


Why, Milton! This sea air must have **miraculous** medicinal properties! Your speech impediment has virtually **disappeared!**

Er... ahem! What can I say, dear child? It comes and it goes...

... as the need arises, I'm sure!

Shall we adjourn to the fortification?



This little hideaway of yours certainly has its fair share of double-breasted **wonders**, Miltie. Are **these** some of your up-and-coming celestial **'discoveries'** awaiting that one big cinematic break?

They were at one time, my love. Mother has since convinced them that there are more **fulfilling** rewards in life!



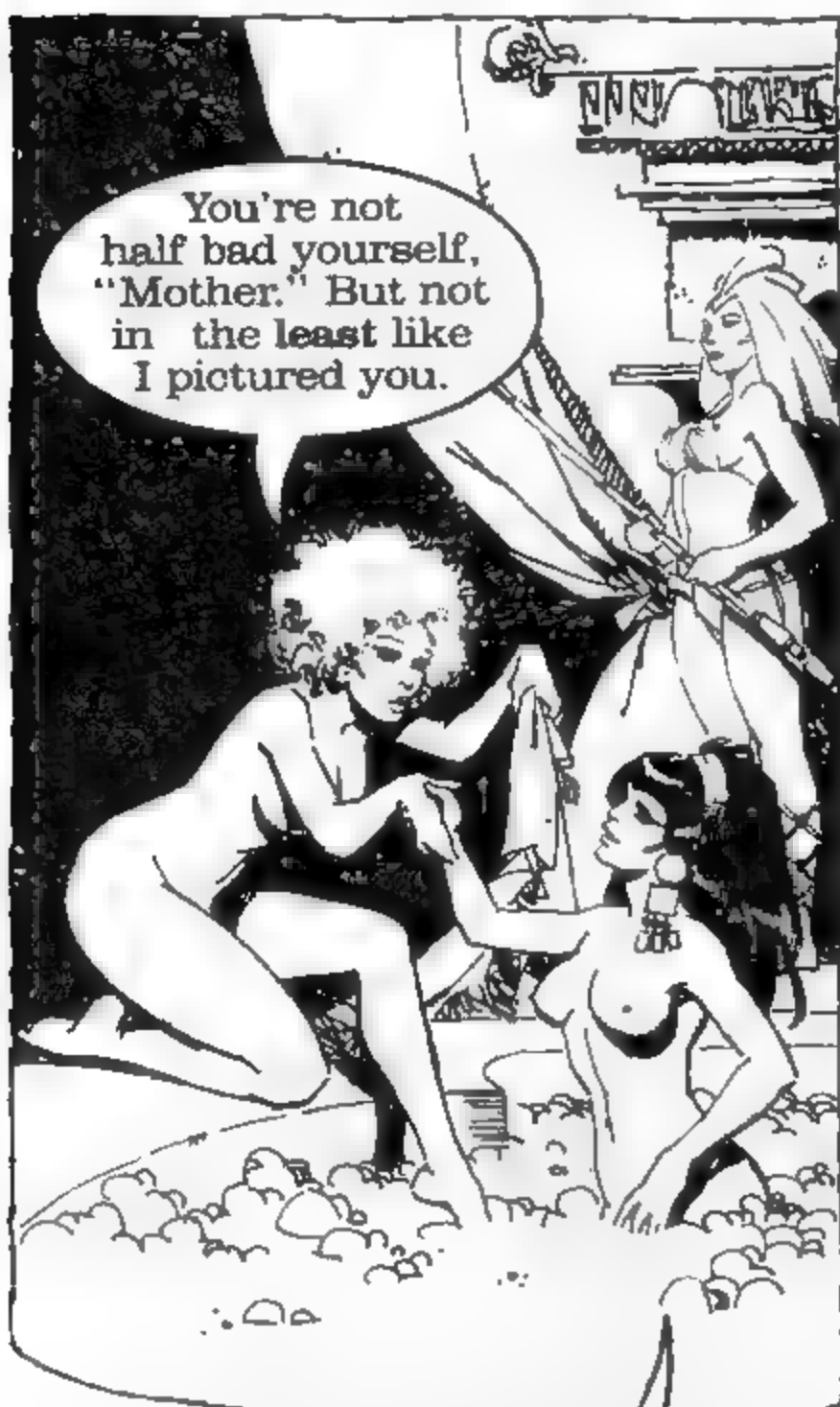
Speaking of **Mother**...! I see she's luxuriating in her usual nightly bath of aromatic perfumes and exotically expensive oils!

That's mother? Remarkably well-preserved!



Oh, Herma! Miltie wasn't exaggerating! You're **exquisite!** Come, my child. Join me.

You're not half bad yourself, "Mother." But not in the least like I pictured you.



That **naughty** Miltie! He probably had you thinking I was a doddering old crone, wrinkled like a prune, chained to a rocking chair and a hairbreadth away from cerebral arteriosclerosis!

But you want to know a secret? I'm not **really** Miltie's mother at all! Mom is just his little nickname for me... because I'm so much like a den mother to our wayward little assemblage of lovelies.

Er, Mother... I think it's **clean** now!



Forgive me, my dear. I do have a tendency to become absolutely **intoxicated** when confronted by gifts such as yours.

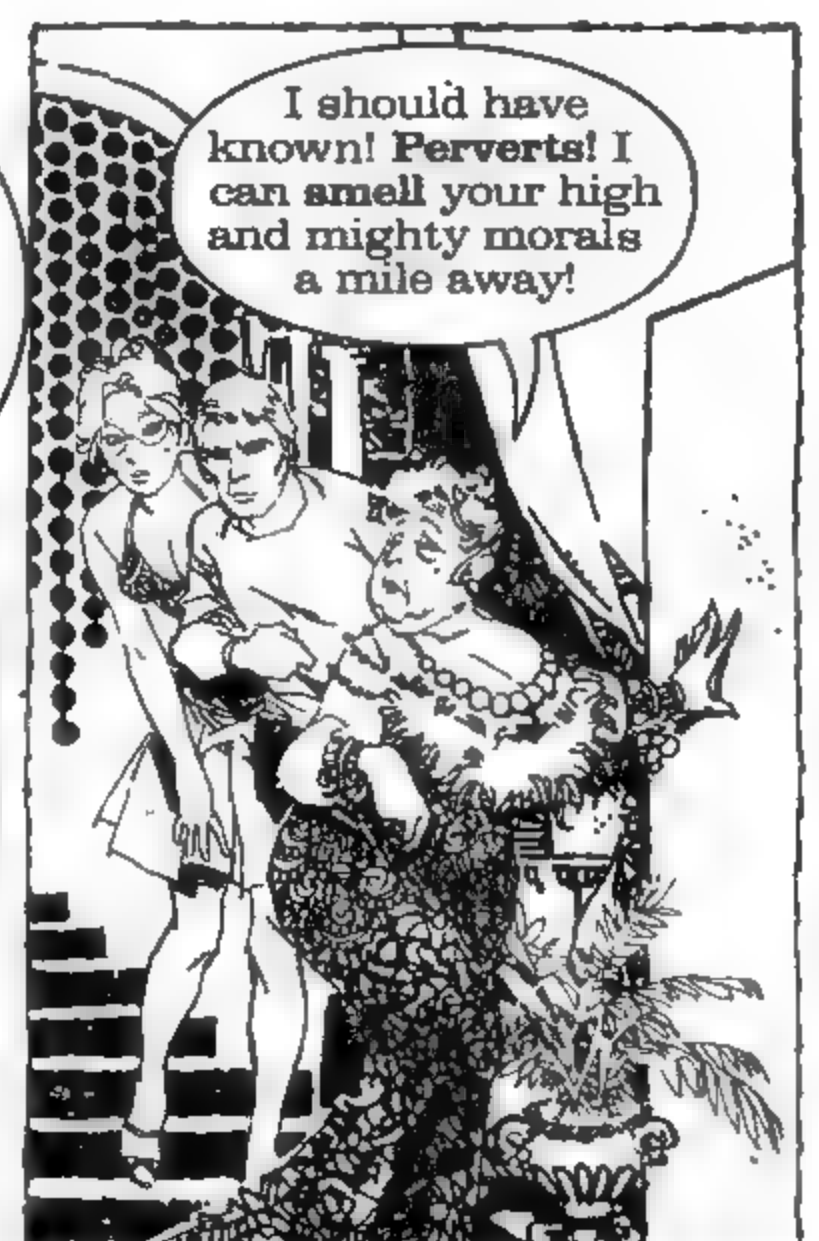
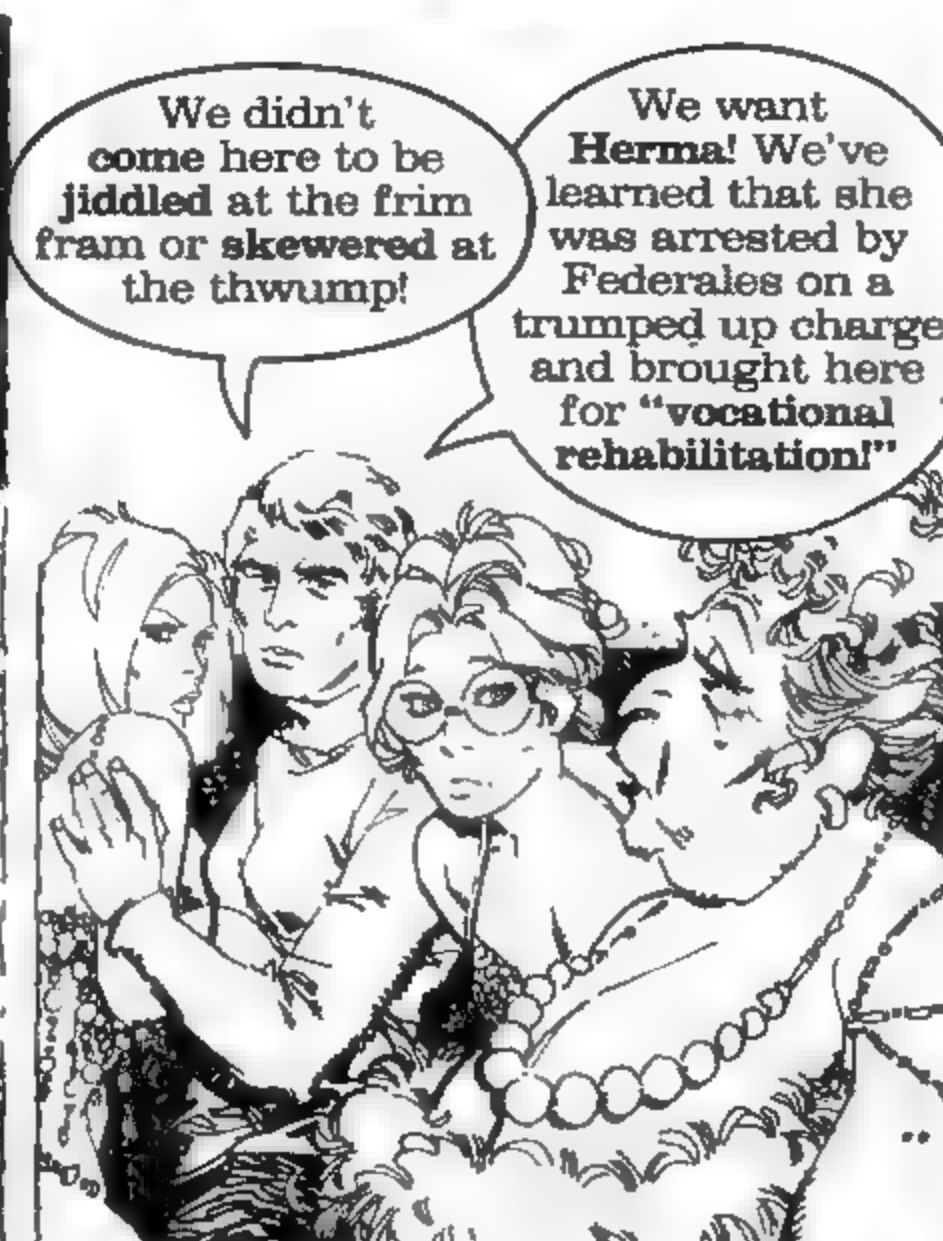
I hope I didn't hurt you. But then pain... **exquisite, rapturous pain**, is the reason why you are here, is it not?!



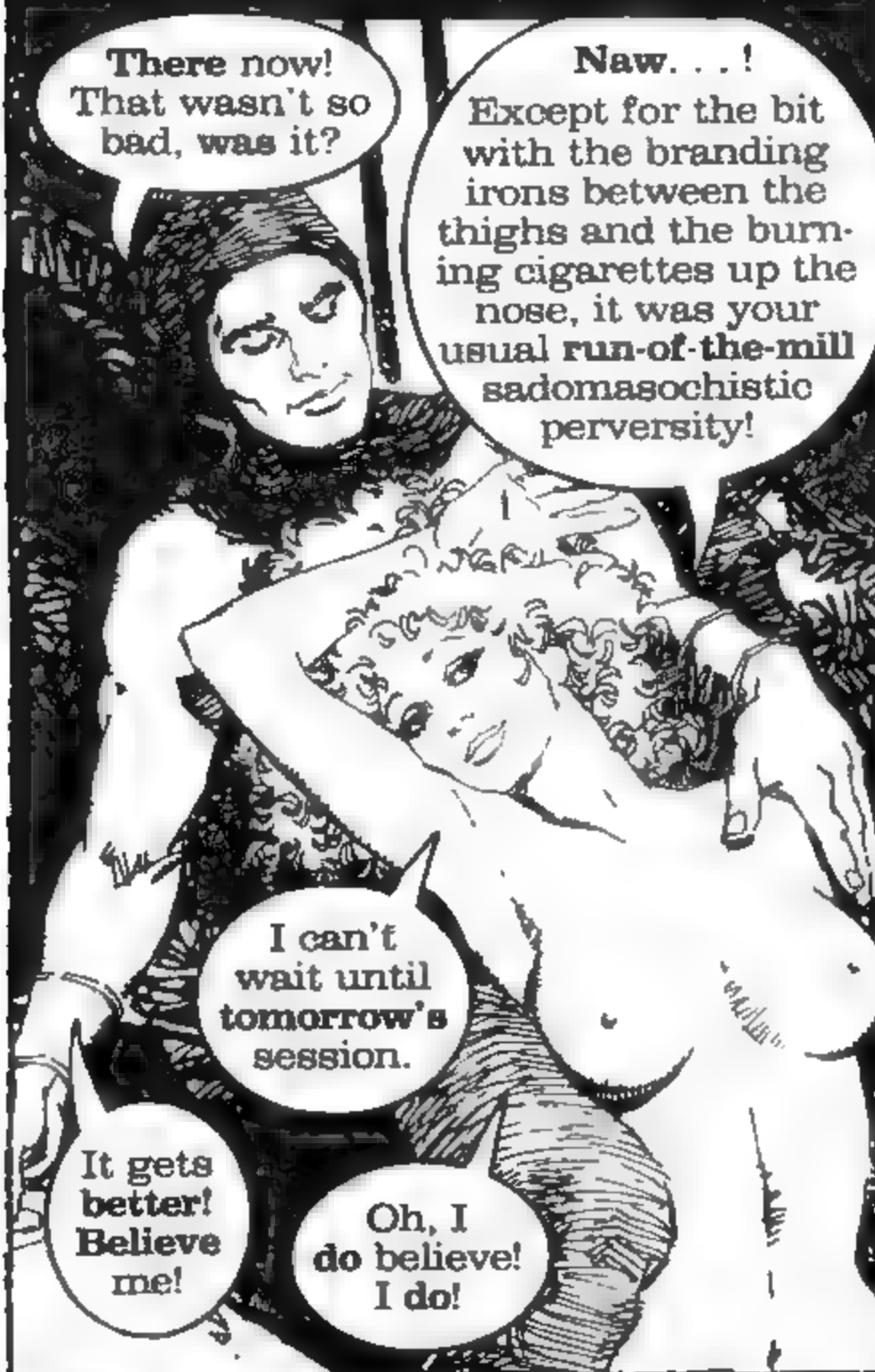
It... it is?



Meanwhile ... and not all that far away, in the gaming house of the infamous Madame Warden, Dr. Cherry Pitts and the unyielding Sir Richard Bolt, are ever-hot on the trail of their missing artifact. Herma!



Some time later... after Mother has gotten her jollies and departed with a smile that only unbridled ecstasy can bring, the Norse goddess torturer administers first aid to his anxiously-receptive victim.




There now! That wasn't so bad, was it?

Naw...! Except for the bit with the branding irons between the thighs and the burning cigarettes up the nose, it was your usual run-of-the-mill sadomasochistic perversity!

I can't wait until tomorrow's session.

It gets better! Believe me!

Oh, I do believe! I do!



I remember one time... I was working over this little Jewish broadie from the South Bronx. I'll be damned if she didn't take a whole quart of Coca Cola down her nose before letting out a good solid yowl!

Thought for sure I was losing my touch with that one!

Oh no, Ludwig! Don't ever think that! You're good at what you do! One of the best... I can assure you!



You say that now. But what do you know? Guys like DeSade, Mengelle, Calley... they're the masters! I can't hold a hot poker to them!

My poor, unappreciated Ludwig! Maybe if I screamed with more sincerity, writhed with more gusto... you would realize how much I appreciate your skills!

Oh, Herma... you really know how to make a man feel like a man!

Ludwig... are we ready?



M-Mother!? Has my expertise so failed to satisfy that you've found it necessary to return so soon for more?

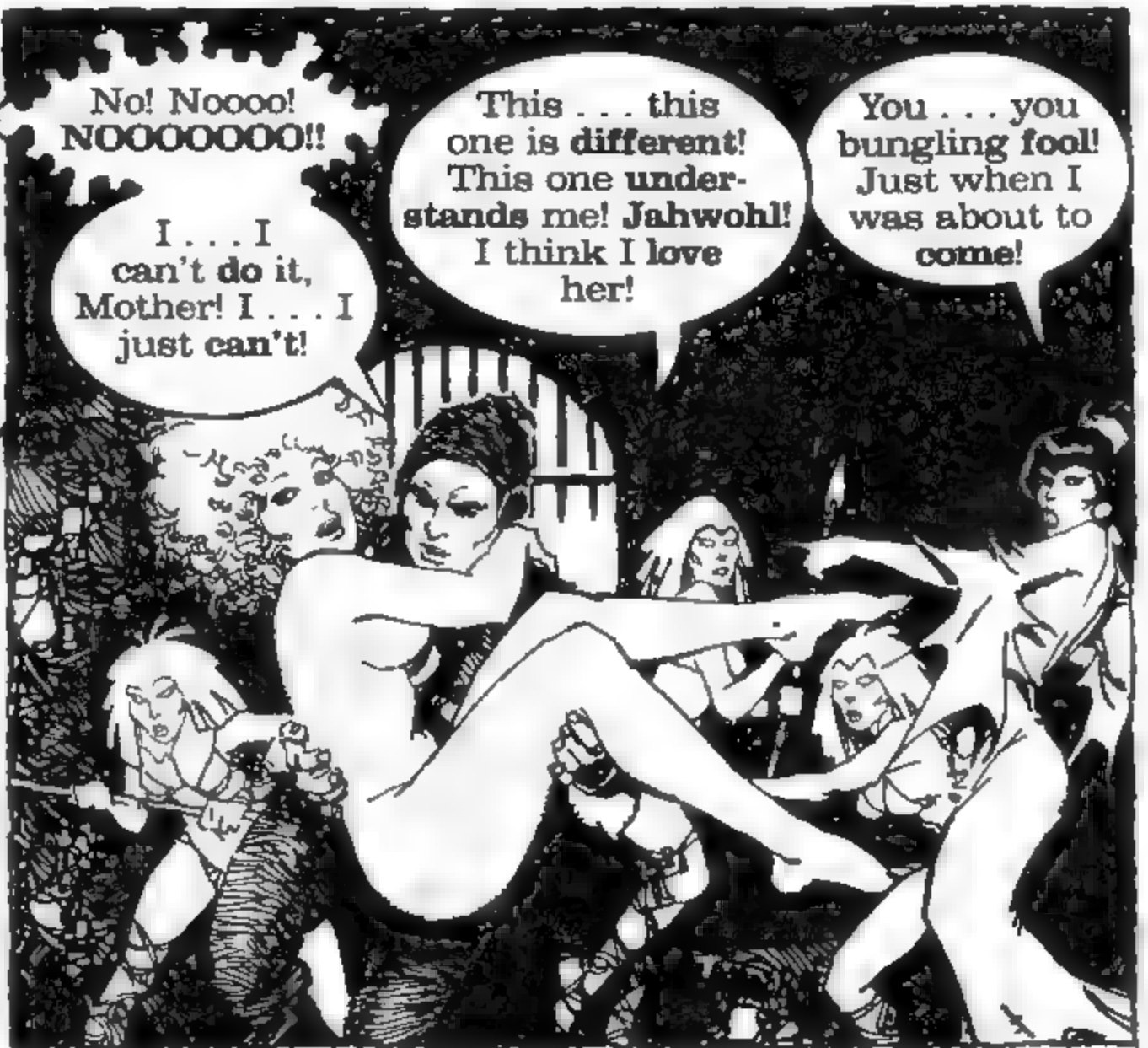
It is neither your shortcomings nor my insatiable lusts, faithful Ludwig. I have simply denied myself far too long!



KILL HER!

But... but... but... M-Mother!

Just think, Ludwig... the consummate thrill of crunching bone! The indescribable tingle of bursting blood vessels! The serendipic delight of that rich, red, orgiastic liquid spewing from ruptured arteries!



No! Noooo! NOOOOOOOO!!

I... I can't do it, Mother! I... I just can't!

This... this one is different! This one understands me! Jahwohl! I think I love her!

You... you bungling fool! Just when I was about to come!



Stop them, my pets! Don't let them get away!

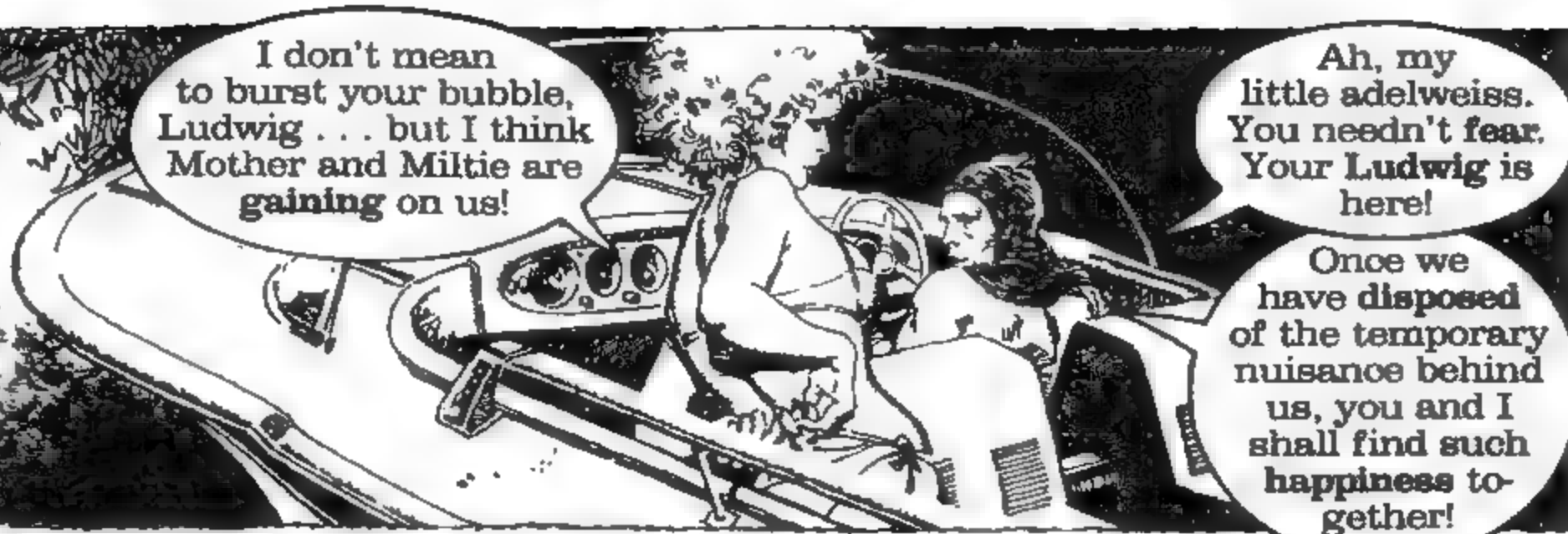
Hurry, Herma! The boat! It's our only chance...!



Oh shucks, Ludwig! I almost wish we hadn't made a break for it!

I was just beginning to get off on the whole thing!

Again, the salt sea spray bathes the Norse beauty with warm, almost erotic droplets as her speeding launch skims across the seascape. This time, however, the sensation is not nearly as stimulating as before. The reverie is shattered by the powerful engines of a larger boat in hot pursuit!



I don't mean to burst your bubble, Ludwig . . . but I think Mother and Miltie are gaining on us!

Ah, my little adelweiss. You needn't fear. Your Ludwig is here!

Once we have disposed of the temporary nuisance behind us, you and I shall find such happiness together!



Ours will be an idyllic existence of licentious lascivious indulgences!

We shall break out the whips and chains, the boiling oils and hot irons. I shall take you to such exquisite depths of pain as you have never before known!

Pain?!



Er . . . I just remembered, Ludwig . . . I have other commitments!

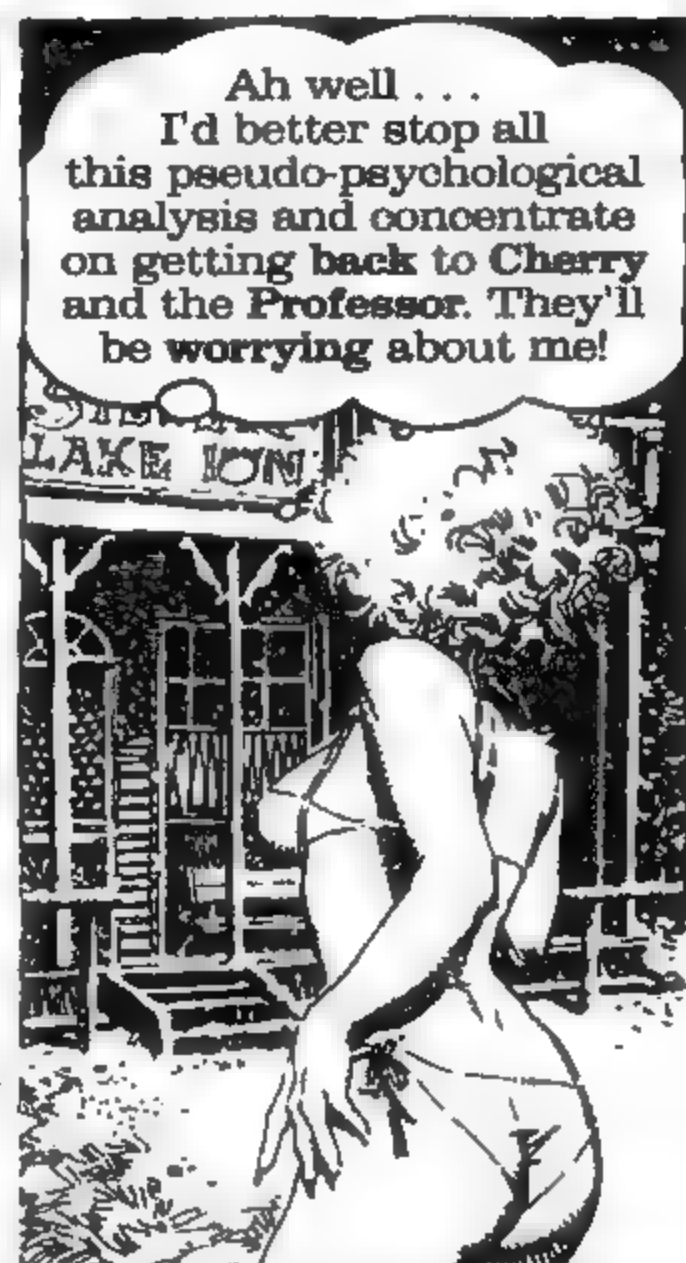
My love! W-wait!

Whips and chains, oils and irons! These modern men have some very strange ideas about fun!



It is a sorry thing to see how civilization has transformed the once-dominant male into simpering, perverted invertebrates!

In my day we did not have men such as Ali Khan Sade, Frito Bandito, Milton J. Krebs or lustful Ludwig the Lurid!



Ah well . . . I'd better stop all this pseudo-psychological analysis and concentrate on getting back to Cherry and the Professor. They'll be worrying about me!



Excuse me, sir. Could you direct me to the nearest telephone?

Aye, lassie! Ye just go on down t'the wharf front, stick yer thumb out and wait fer th'first freighter t'the mainland! Should be one comin' by here in two, three months!

Two or three months?!



Good heavens! Whatever will I do with myself until then?

GIRL WANTED for

THE SILVER LAKE INN

GREAT STRIP-TEASE SHOW

APPLY HERE!

And so it is that Herma finds herself with her first real employment in more than a thousand years... simply as a means to kill time and earn a respectable living while she waits for the next boat to take her home!

Remember, lass... These rubes is not a th'cultured kind! Them what ain't been at sea fer th'last six months, is been locked away on this ferbidden' rock, an' 'ave all but fergotten what a pretty face looks like!

Show 'em a little kindness, love... an' other bits a yer flesh as well!

All right, Paddy. You know best!

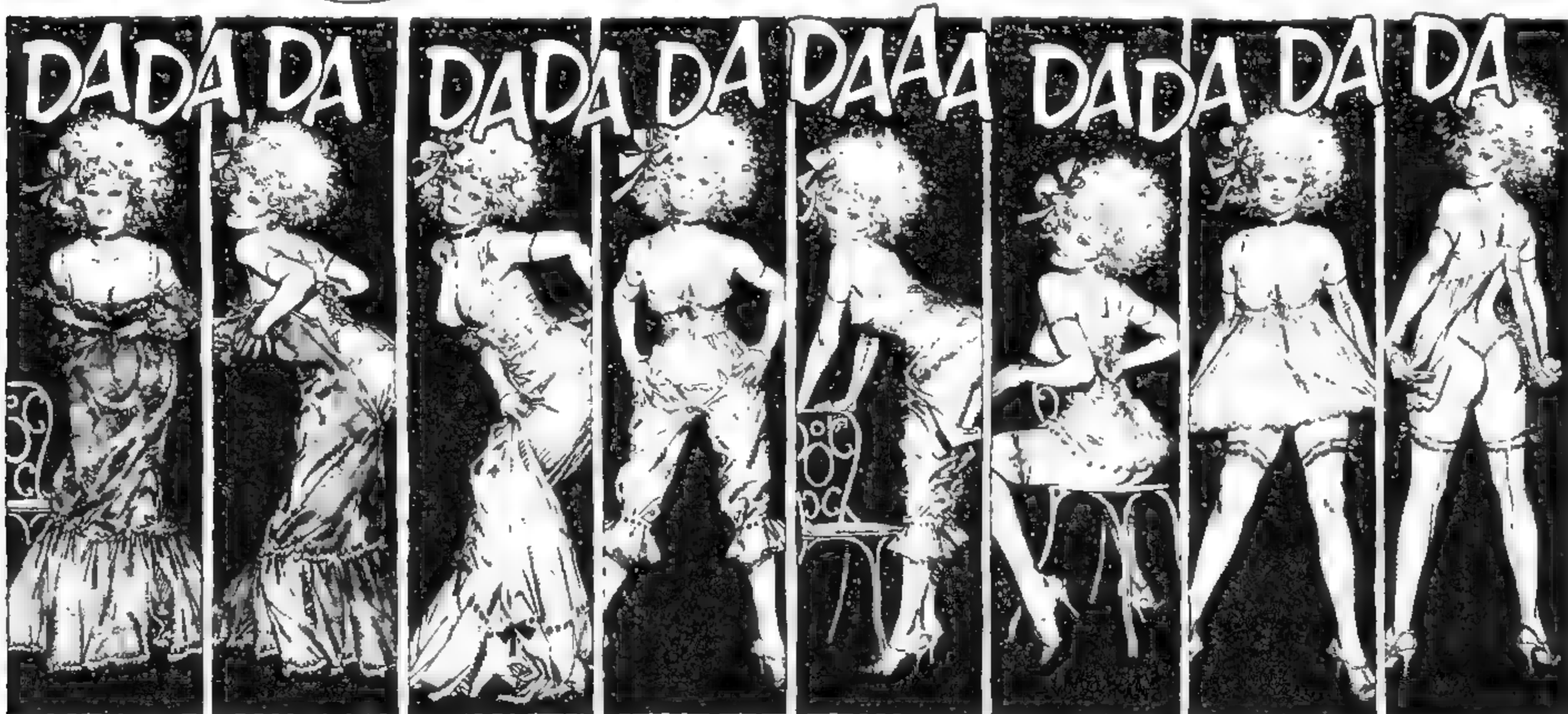
Gentlemen an' landlubbers...! T'night we have a show that yer won't be soon fergettin'!

This lovely young creature, of obvious an' ample talents, is gonna entertain us all!

I only ask that ye don't be doin' nothin' n front'a her that ye wouldn't do in th'presence a yer own dear mothers!

An' that means th'first one t'get any a his overpowerin' essence all over me nice clean floors, is gonna be pryin' me foot outta his ear!

Maestro... the record, please!



The crowd roars with approval as the sparsely dressed girl twists and turns in their midst. The men swarm over her, reaching out, grabbing, pulling, caressing and squeezing double handfuls of her succulent succulence. Suddenly, a mammothly muscled arm snakes through the confusion and claims Herma as his very own! Throughout it all, the Viking goddess oozes with the comely fluids of felicity! At last, after traversing the world over, she has found them! These are men... hail and hearty as men should be... after her own heart, and other, equally lubricious parts of her anatomy, as well!

All right, Popeye! Put the sweetmeats down!

She's ours, man! Can't y' see she's havin' a good time!?

Yeah! Go away, y'limp-limbed pervert! We don't want your kind around here!

I say, dear girl! It's so unlike you to hobnob about with such loathsomely uncouth boors!

Oh, Herma! I've been so worried about you. I've missed you so much. You will come back with us, won't you?

Sweet Cherry! How could I ever refuse? Especially when I'm being rescued by such a magnificent hunk of masculine virility? He reminds me of my own dear departed Hagar!

And so it goes. . . ! Herma, Cherry, the Professor and Sir Richard return to Her Majesty's majestic isles. But far from besieged by boredom living under the proverbial microscope of scientific scrutinization, the Valkyrie princess finds happiness and contentment . . . and breathes a sigh of relief with the knowledge that not all men of this sexually-comatomatic world are wayward parodies of the virile lords of old!

Listen, love. . . ! I've got to warn you about Sir Richard. He's not all that he's cracked up to be. I can't tell you how many times I've tried to help the poor boy. But he's like a dead fish . . . you know what I mean?

Maybe you just didn't use the right approach, Cherr. I ask you . . . does this look like a dead fish?

Good lord! The poor man's deformed!

But . . . but . . . I mean . . . if he's so . . . so impaired . . . why . . . why didn't he? I mean . . . I . . . I . . . !

I just didn't want to hurt you, Doctor. But dear Herma . . . she's made of sterner stuff!

I don't know why you're so amazed, Cherry. Sir Richard may be minuscule compared to the men of my day . . .

M-m-minuscule!?

. . . but I can assure you, he is still intoxicatingly functional!

PROLOGUE



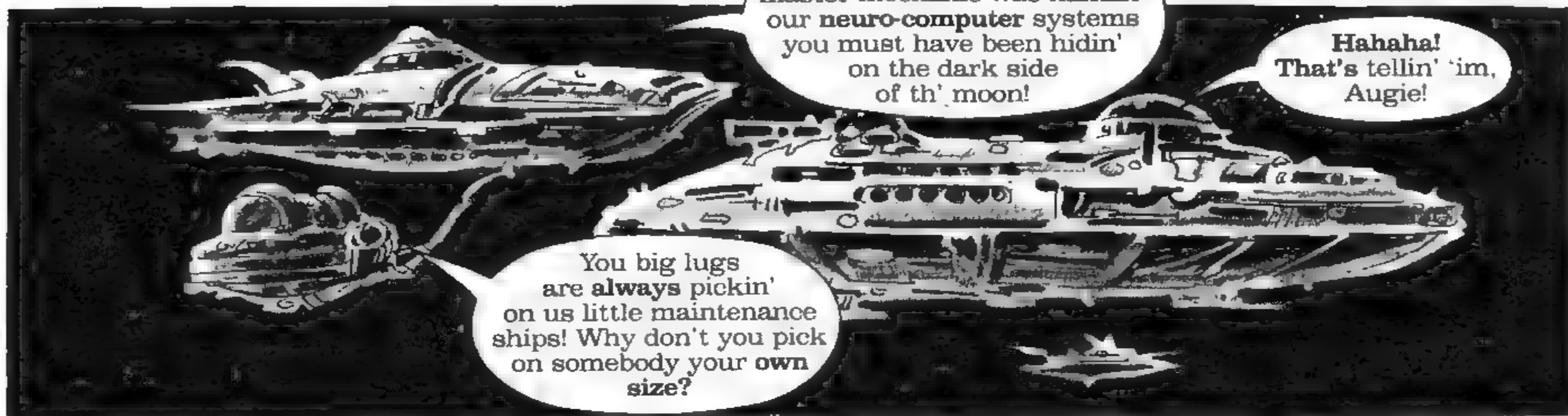
Hurry it up, little scrap heap. Get me loaded. The sooner I can warp out of here with those Vesuvian slug-skins the sooner I can deliver them and get paid!

Don't get your gyros hot, big boy! I'm loadin' 'em as fast as I can.

Y'know, Shep, when the master mechanic was handin' our neuro-computer systems you must have been hidin' on the dark side of th' moon!

Hahaha! That's tellin' 'im, Augie!

You big lugs are always pickin' on us little maintenance ships! Why don't you pick on somebody your own size?



Attention, all craft. Tune to Channel Zeta B-7 for an emergency transmission!



Ships of the Omega Fleet. dire times are upon us! The human population of the planet Arcturius II has been set upon by the deadly Orion Virus!

Because of the recent rash of natural disasters within the Arcturian system, most of the quadrant's medical facilities have been destroyed. Only an emergency shipment of anti-toxin can save the planet's population from extinction. . . .!



And the only way the anti-toxin can be delivered in time is for the rescue ship to navigate through the Black Hole of Revis VII!



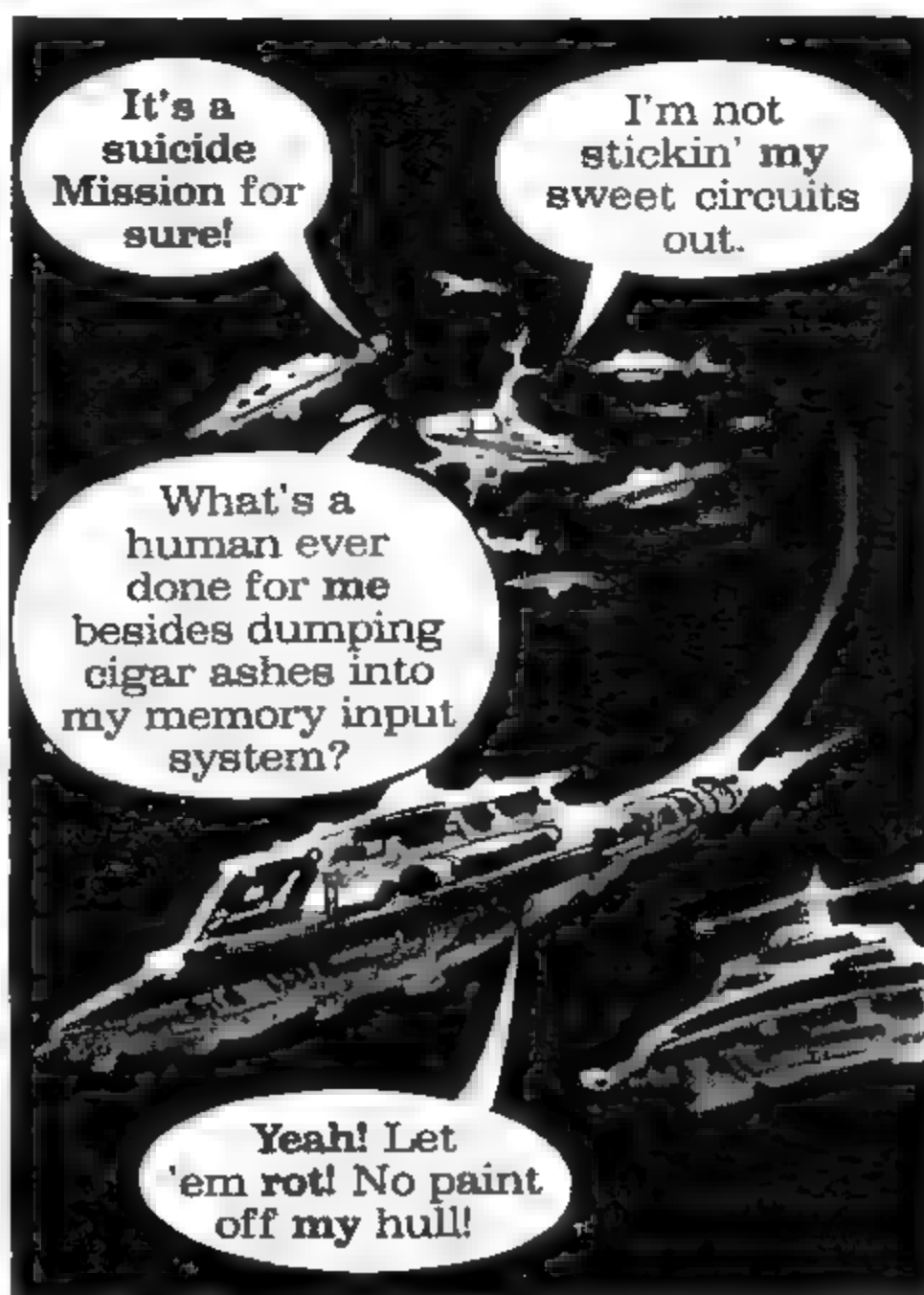
By the Holy Electrode! Only a Hyper-Battlewagon has been able to navigate through a black hole and come out in one piece!

It's a suicide Mission for sure!

I'm not stickin' my sweet circuits out.

What's a human ever done for me besides dumping cigar ashes into my memory input system?

Yeah! Let 'em rot! No paint off my hull!



In the Seventh Millennium, mankind freed itself from the rigors and dangers of space travel with the creation of an independent thinking computer system. With these units all the spaceships in the many and far flung Terran fleets could operate and function as independent intelligent units meaning that not another human life would ever be lost in the limitless cosmos of outer space.

Please! We need a ship! Three billion lives are at stake!

Uh-uh. No way!

Sorry, Charlie!



THE LITTLE SPACESHIP THAT COULD!

What about you, Augie? You've got the latest in ion propulsion! You've made the Kelsel Run through the Myra Belt three time . . .!

Those rocks in the Asteriod Belt are like jellybeans compared with a black hole! My hull would shatter like a cracked eggshell!



But there's no other way to reach the humans in time! By traveling through the black hole you'll be utilizing a tunnel that leads through the very center of the dimensional fabric of space. Hundreds of thousands of parsecs and millions of precious microns will be saved!



And once I got caught in the tidal suction in that black hole I'd never make it out! It's impossible! If the humans want to save their Arcturian brothers, let them take a Pre-think ship out of a museum and go though the black hole themselves!

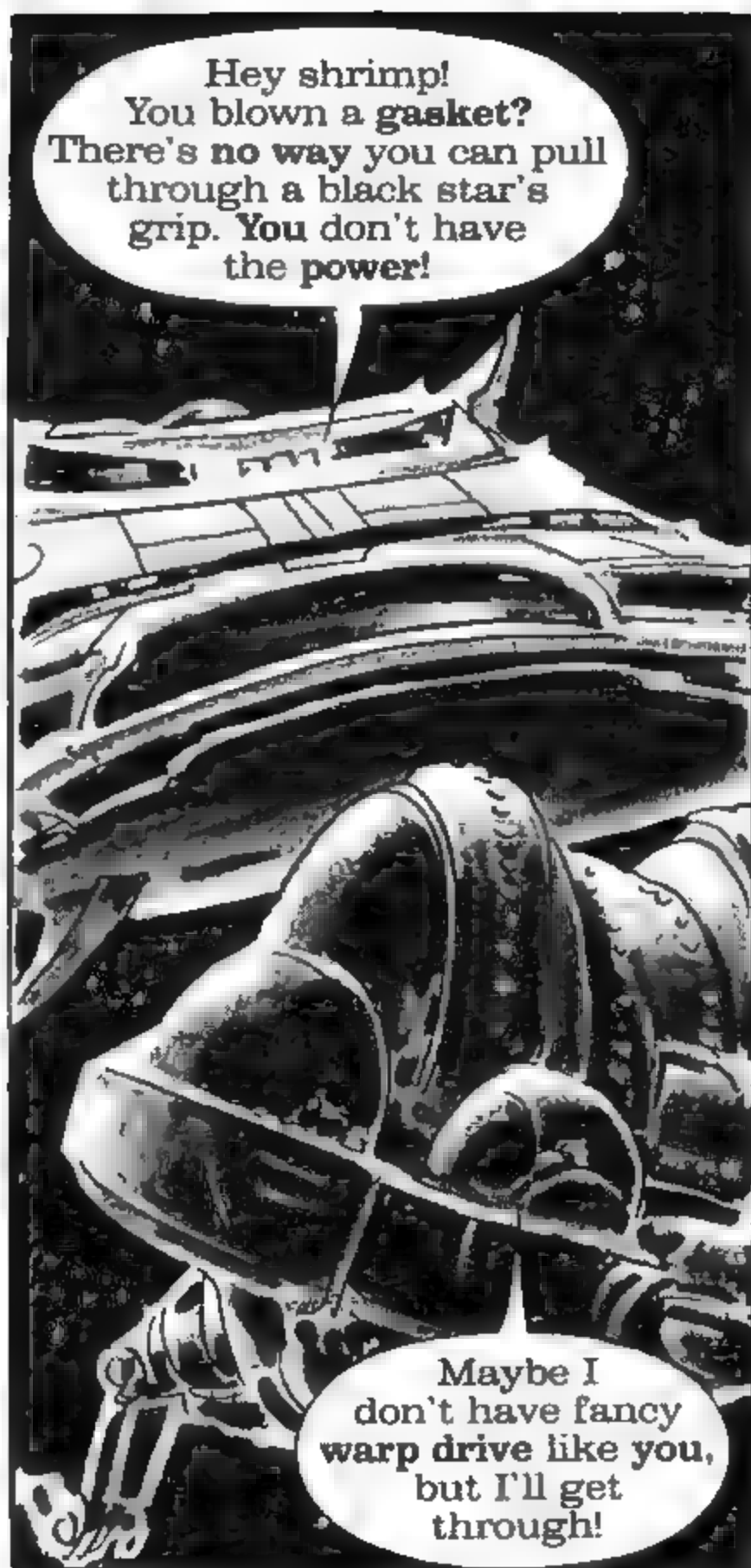
I'll Transport the serum through the black hole!

I said I'd get the serum to the humans in time!

What did you say, you rusty little junkball?

Oy Veh! A mouse musta' pissed in his logic center! His whole system has gotta be shorted out!





Hey shrimp!
You blown a gasket?
There's no way you can pull
through a black star's
grip. You don't have
the power!

Maybe I
don't have fancy
warp drive like you,
but I'll get
through!



Are
you sure,
Shep?

Sure
I'm sure!
I can do
it!

Don't
listen to him!
You'll just be
wasting your
serum.

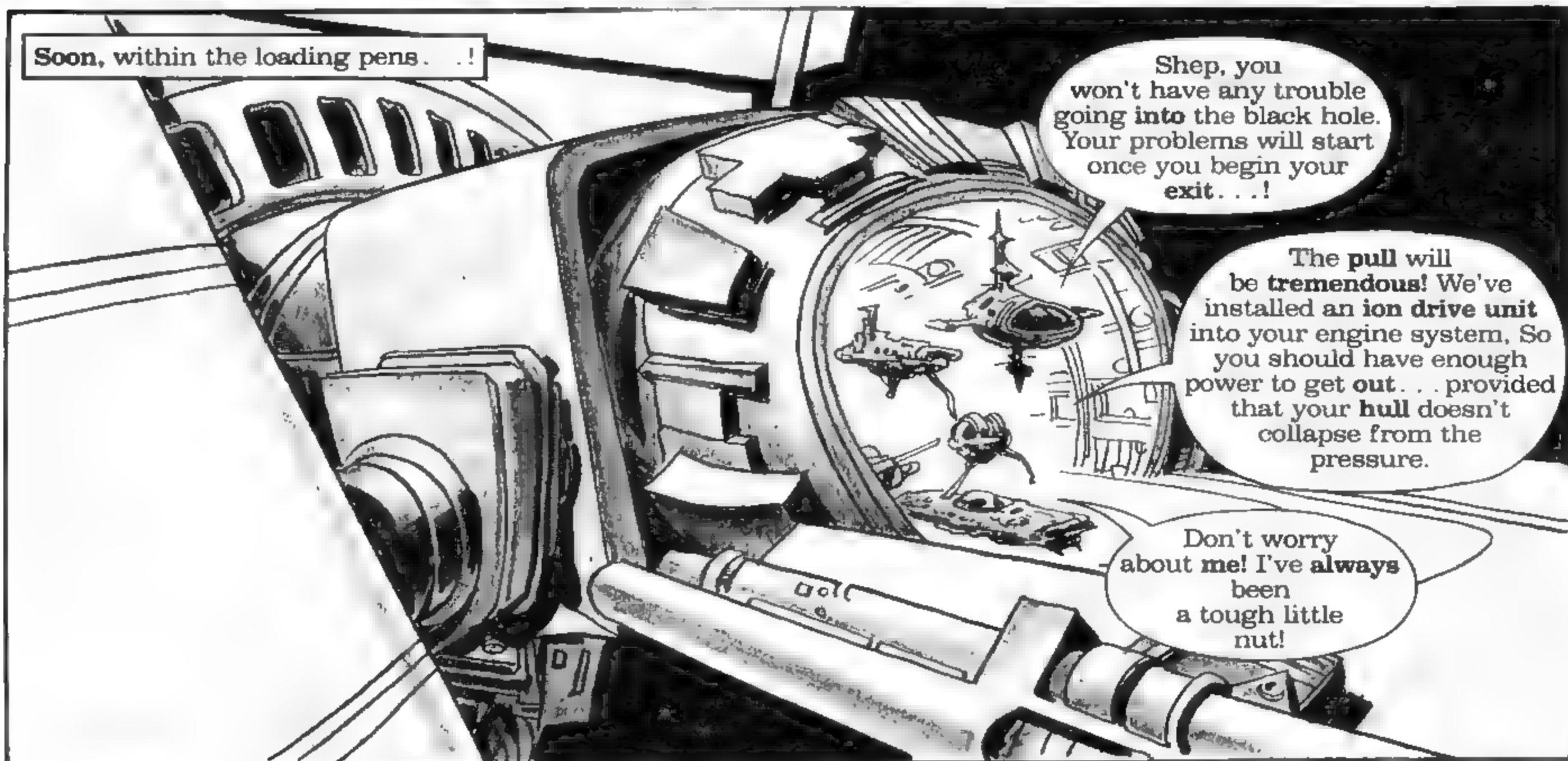


That tug
is lucky if he makes
it from the loading docks to a ship's
cargo hold without breaking down a half
dozen times!

Have
you changed
your mind about
hauling the
serum,
Augie?

No way!
Not through
no black
hole!

It has
to go through the black hole!
And since Shep is the only ship in the
whole fleet with enough courage to haul
it, you'd better shut off the insults
or one of my interceptors might
accidentally miss-fire up your
rear end!

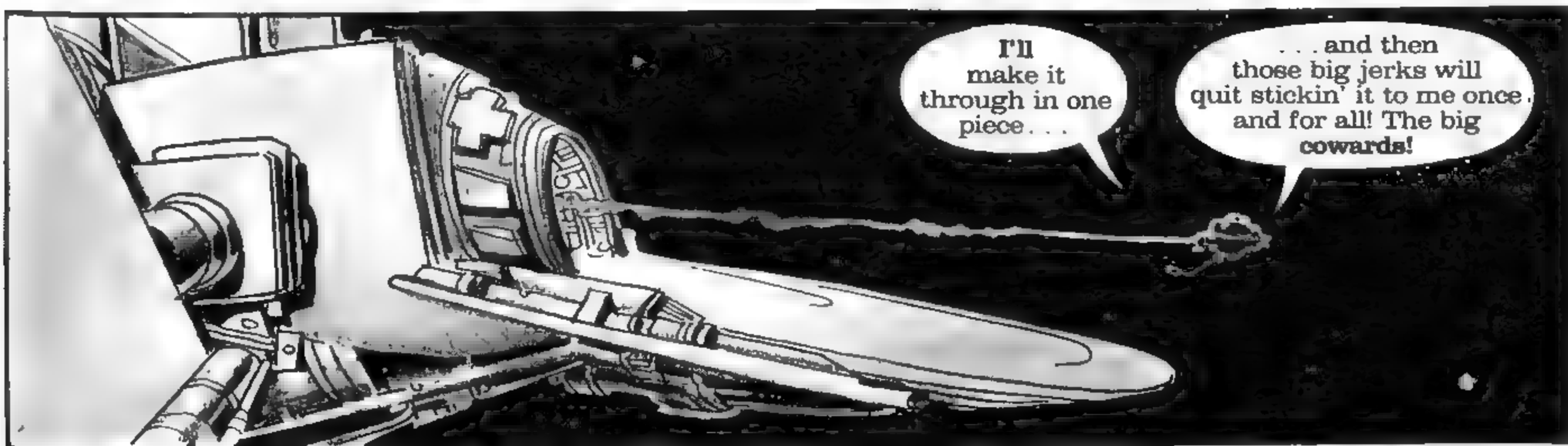


Soon, within the loading pens. . .!

Shep, you
won't have any trouble
going into the black hole.
Your problems will start
once you begin your
exit. . .!

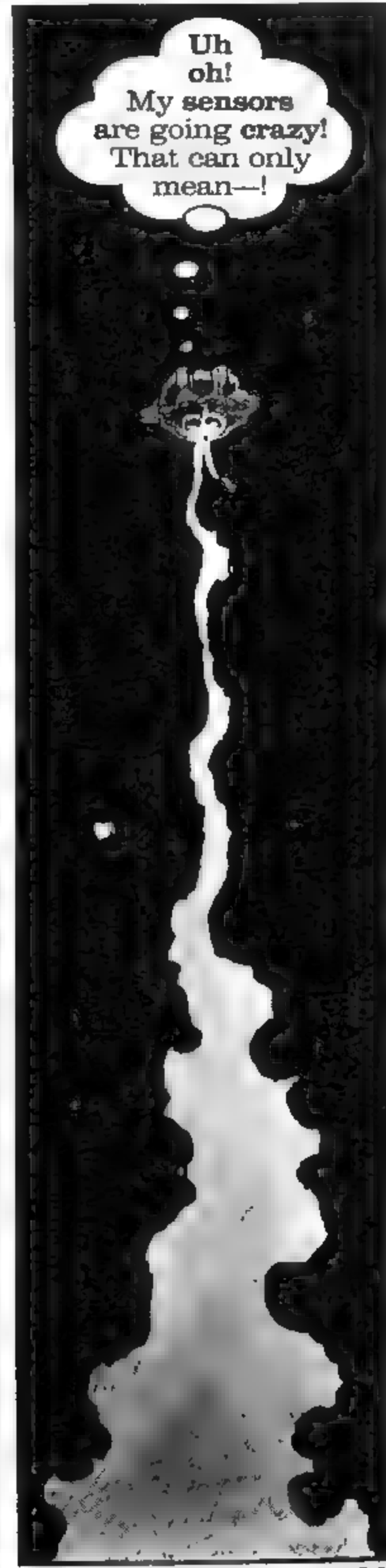
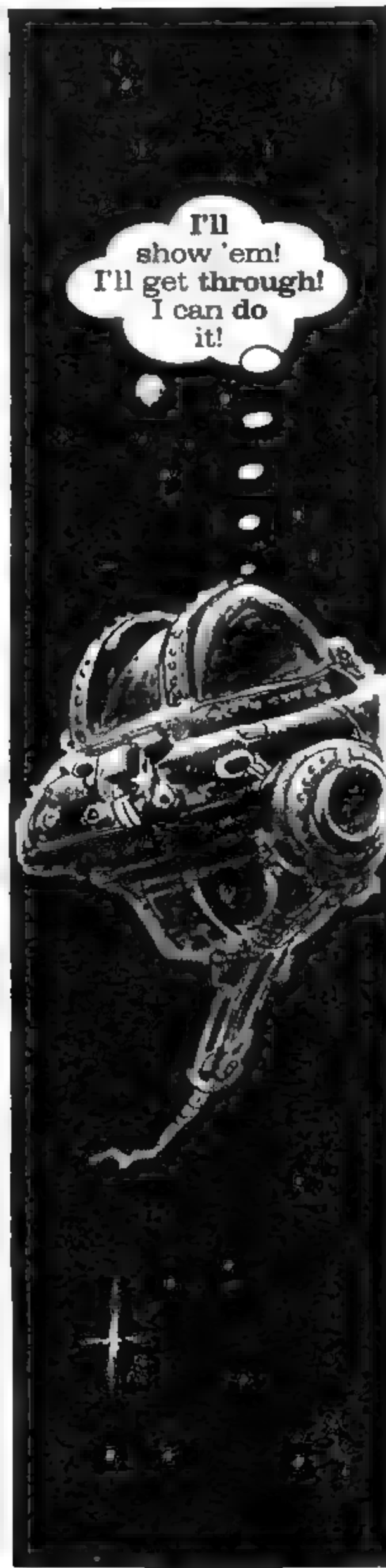
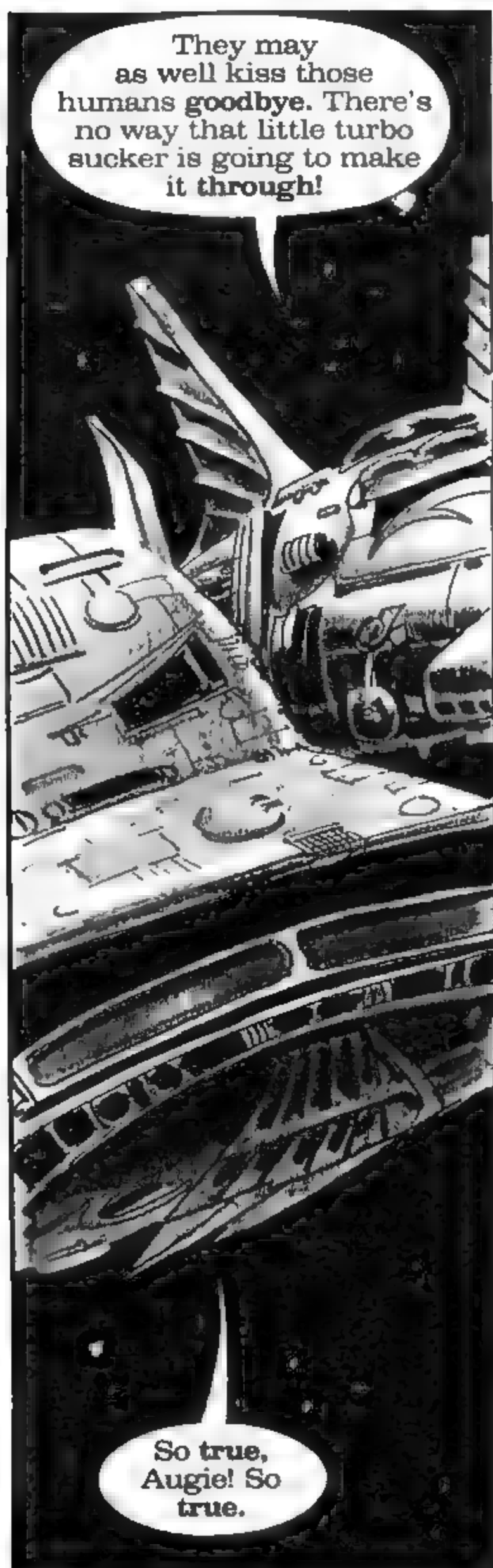
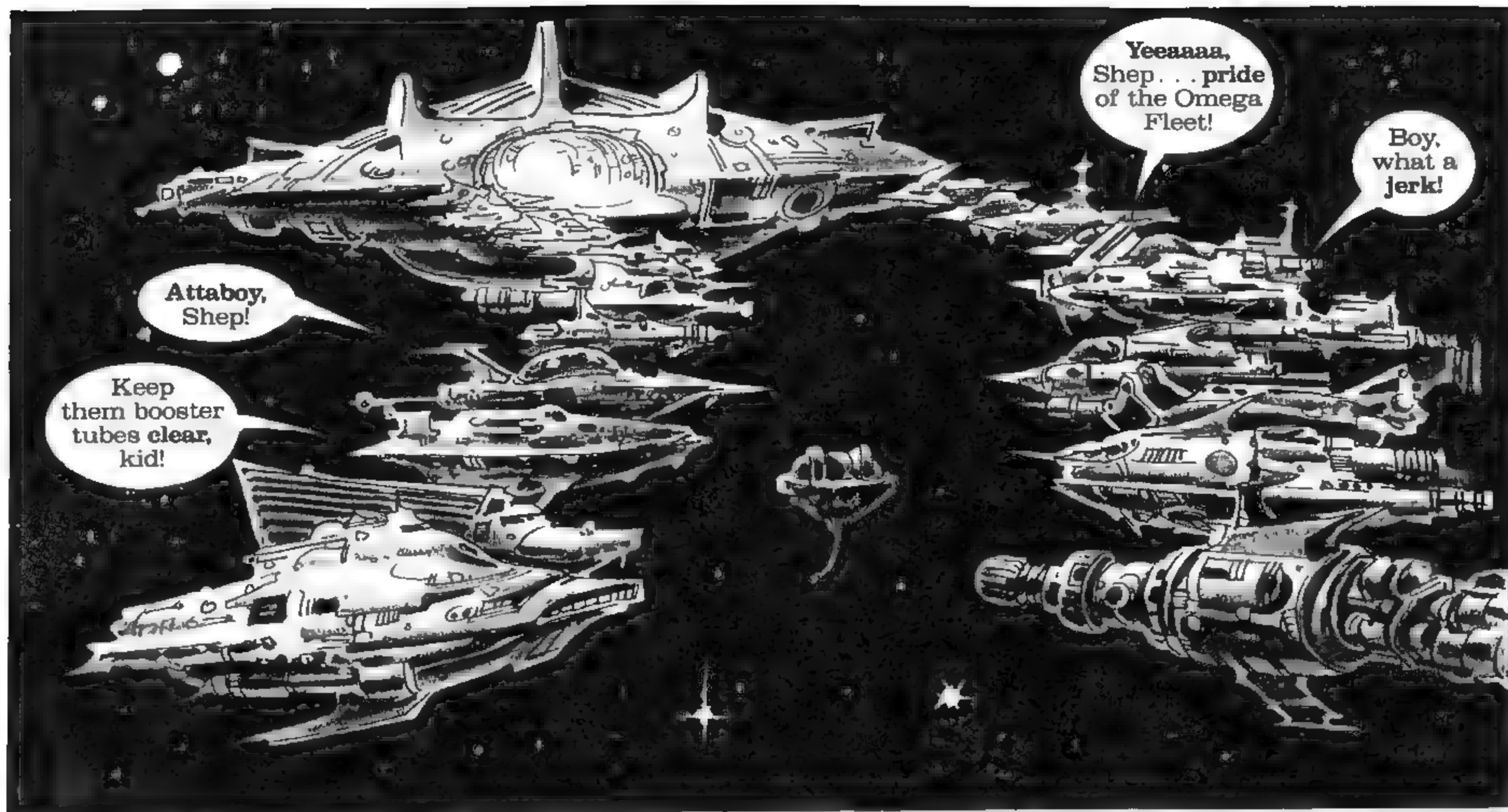
The pull will
be tremendous! We've
installed an ion drive unit
into your engine system. So
you should have enough
power to get out. . . provided
that your hull doesn't
collapse from the
pressure.

Don't worry
about me! I've always
been
a tough little
nut!

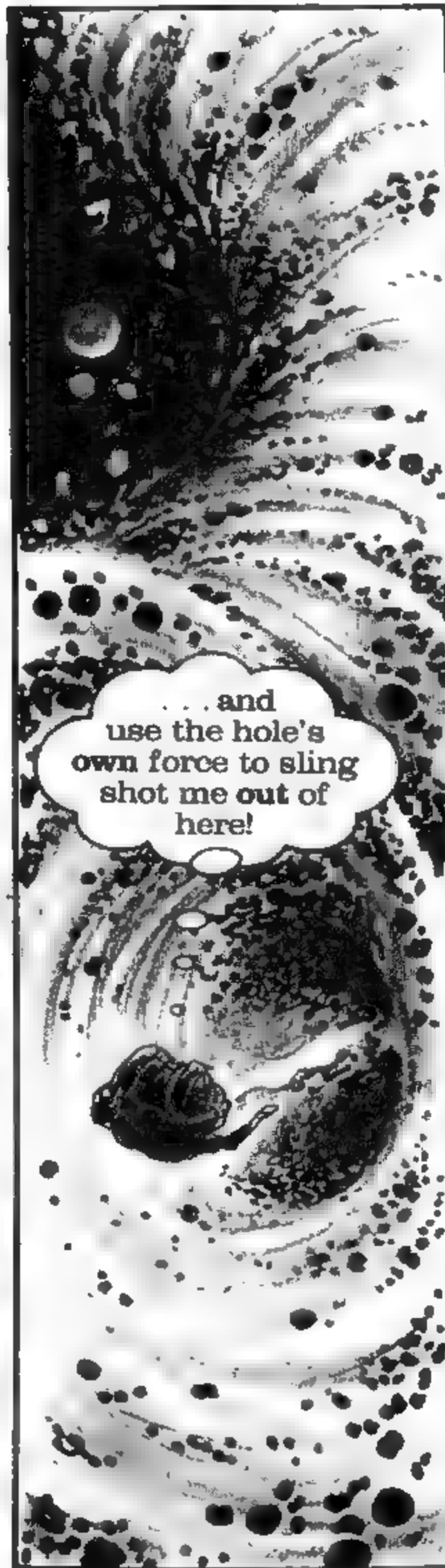
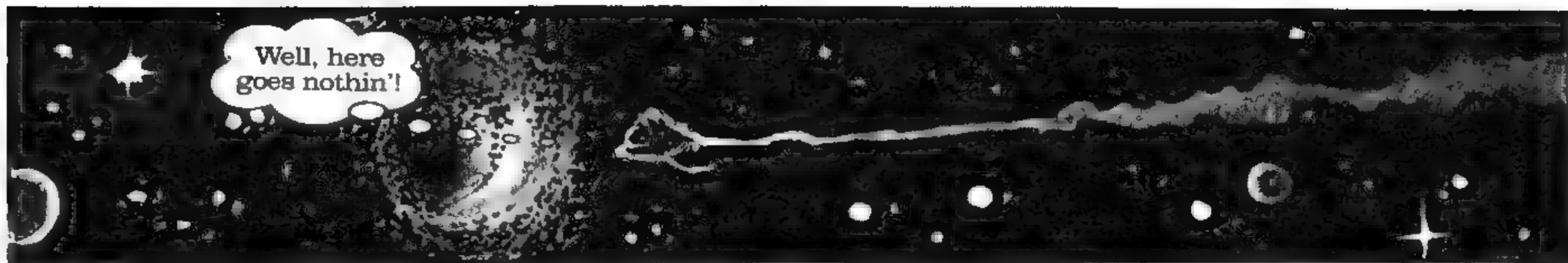


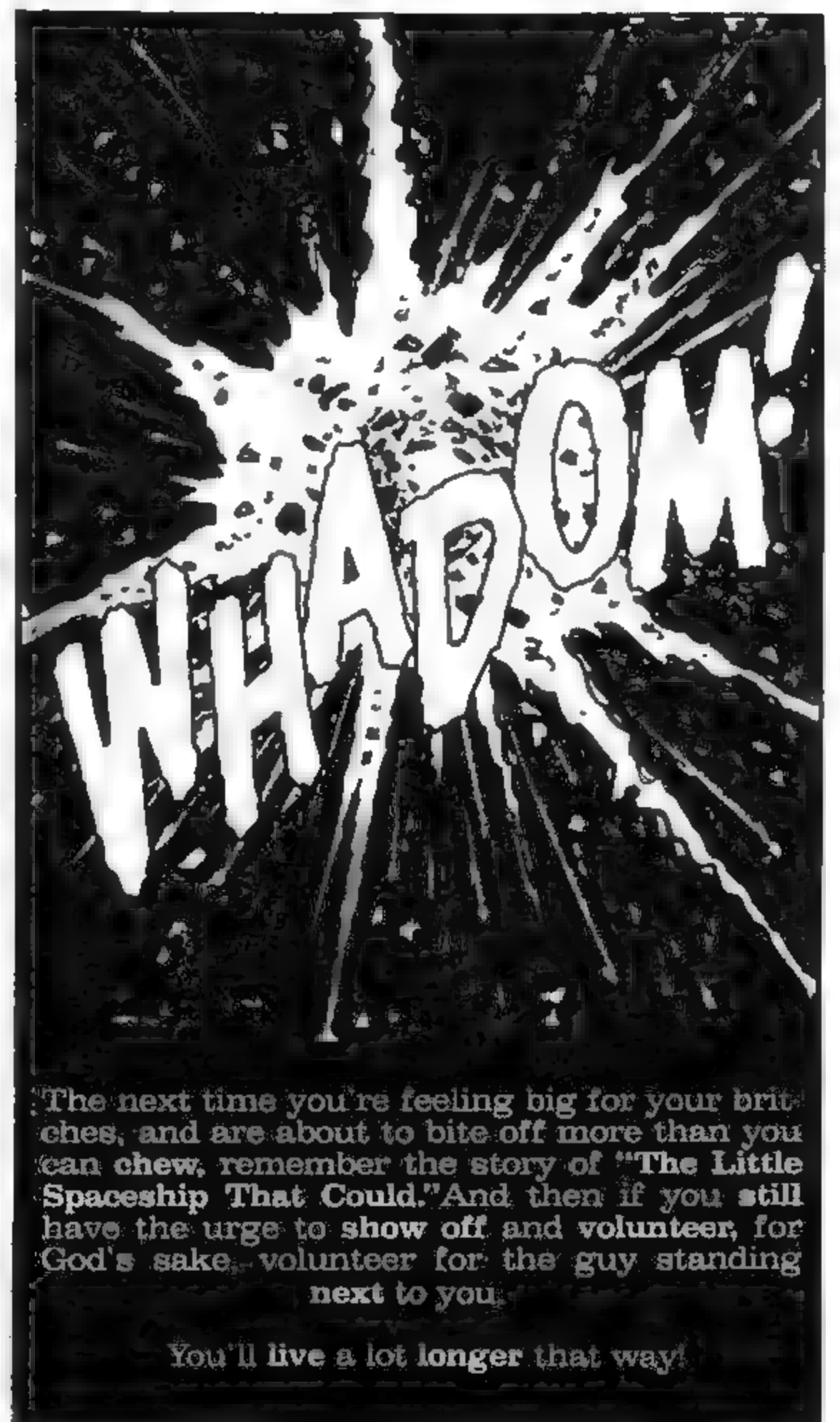
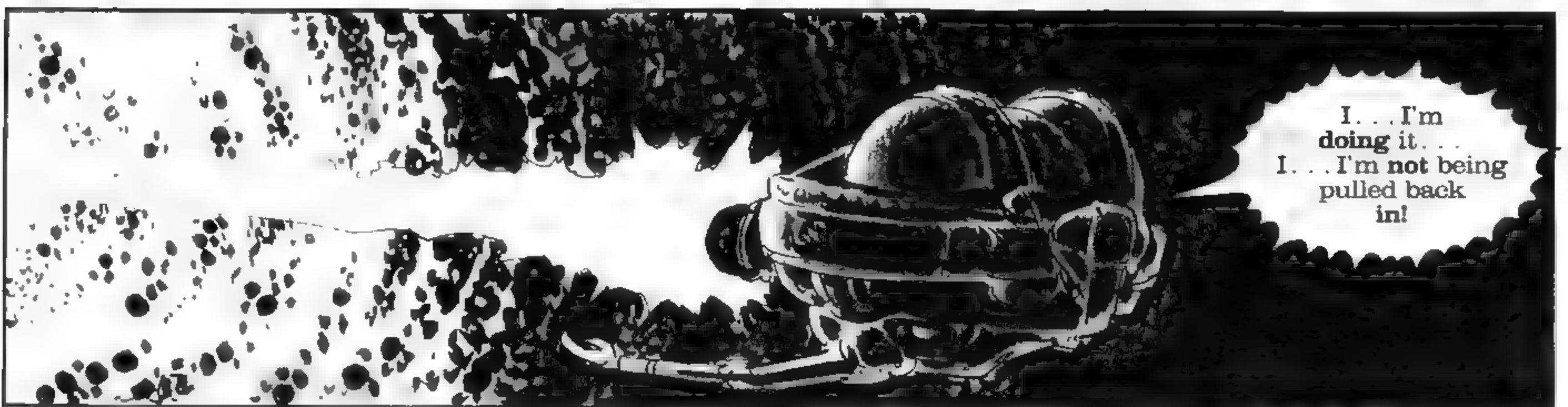
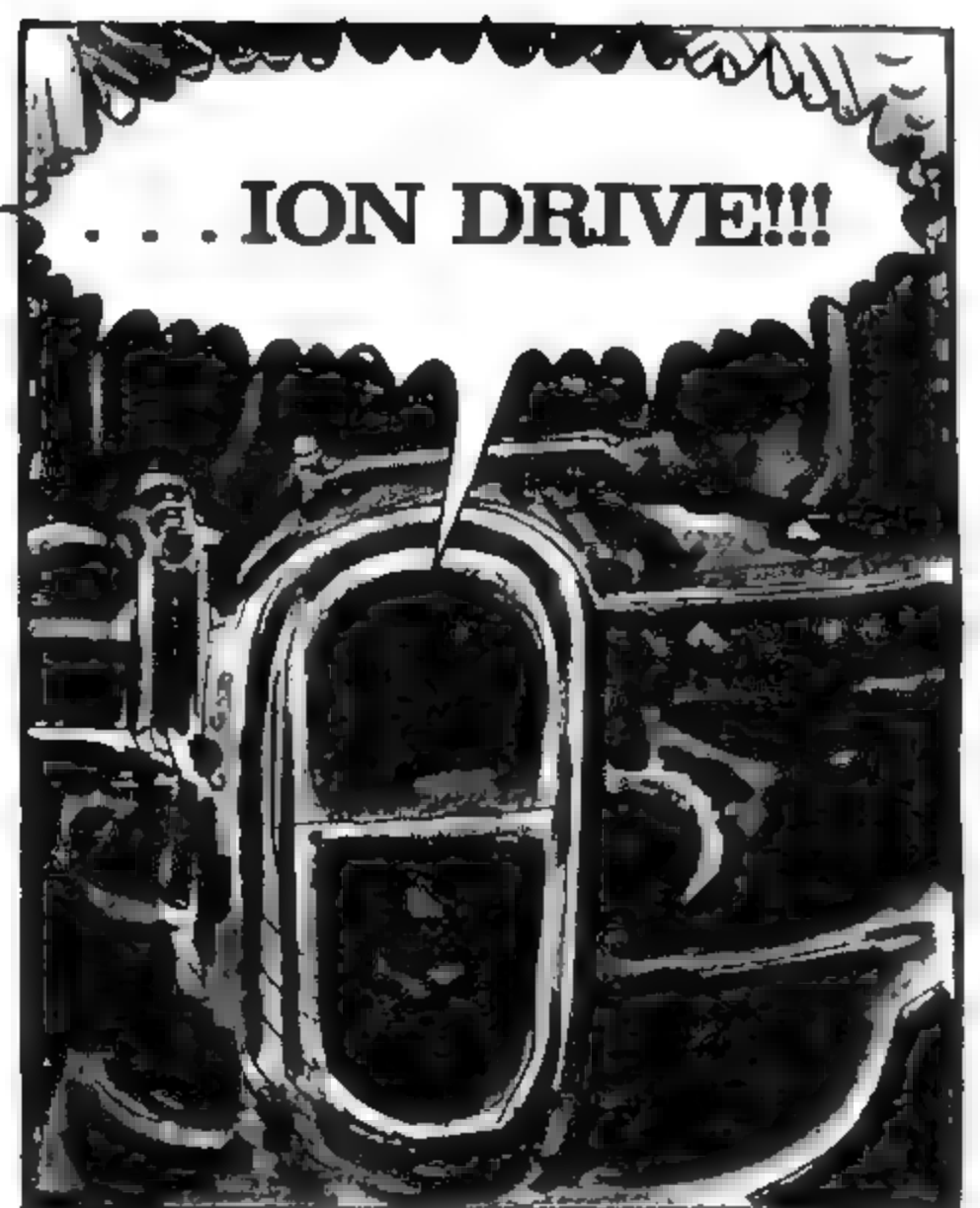
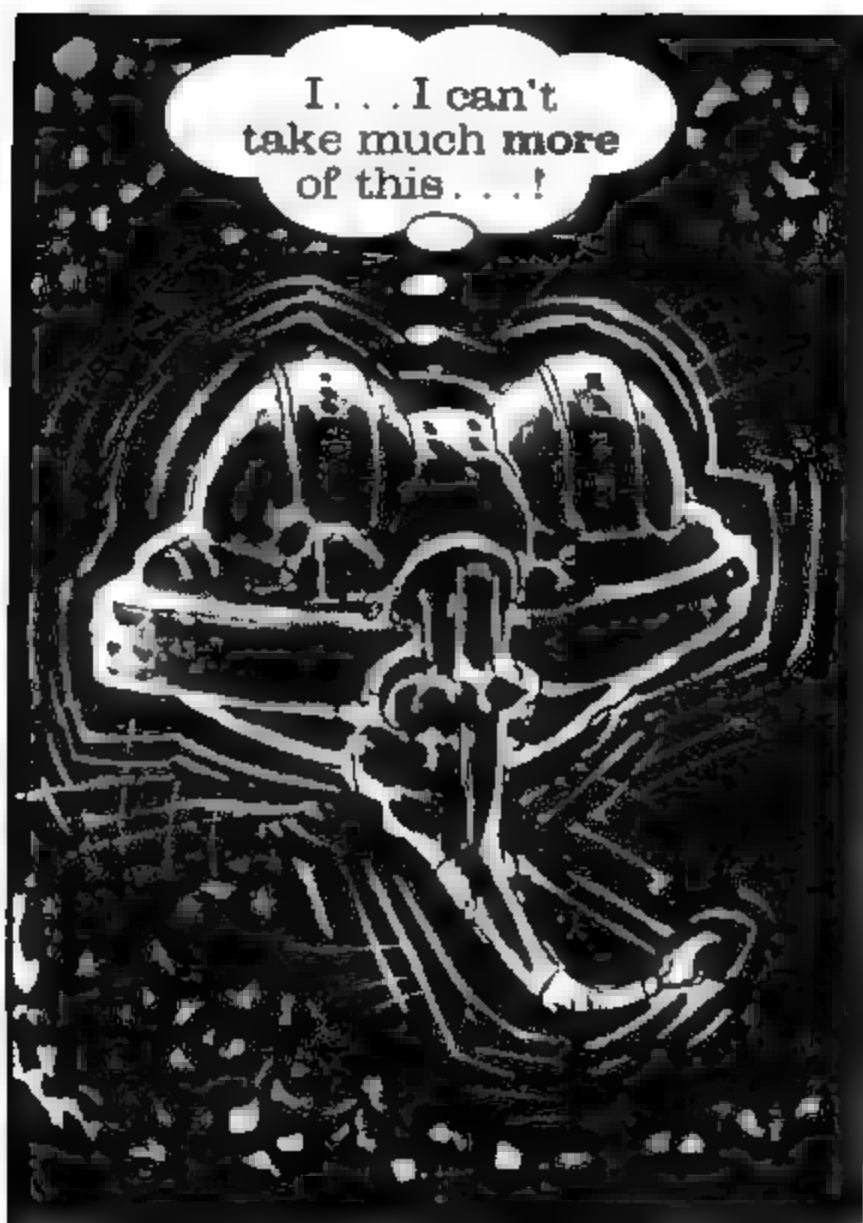
I'll
make it
through in one
piece. . .


. . . and then
those big jerks will
quit stickin' it to me once.
and for all! The big
cowards!











The tremendously colossal Klank mothership orbits the Earth like a hungry bird of prey. The reason it has been dubbed the mothership should be readily apparent! It is one mother of a ship!

Awright,
ya bunch'a crank-
shaft sniffin' zincheads
... lissen up!

The Starvessel's commander,
Colonel Klinker, is also one
monolithic mother to be
reckoned with!

Some'a you
rustpots are green and
ain't never saw no
action.

Before
today's star-date
is over, you'll have a
lead-bellyfull!

You tin-plated
officers are privy to this
little pep talk 'cause you're
gonna lead the first
assualt waves!

Accordin'
to G-2, resistance is
supposed to be unexpectedly
light! So count your blessin's
while they last!

The metaloid officers stand staunchly at attention and
salute smartly before marching with much clangorous
clanking, to their warships...

under the ever-watchful eye of their
commander, who briefly and secretly
nourishes the perverted human desire for a
good cigar!

No one ever said a
robot's life was an
easy one!

Slowly, ominously,
the malevolent
Mothership opens
her mile-wide
hangar bay
hatches...

... disgorging
dozens of her
deadly sons ...
each packing
enough fearsome
firepower to raze a
Terran city!

There are fighters...

... fighter-bombers...

landing assault troop transports...

bombers...

cruisers, destroyers, battlewagons and
dreadnoughts! In short, one humungus shit
load of military might!

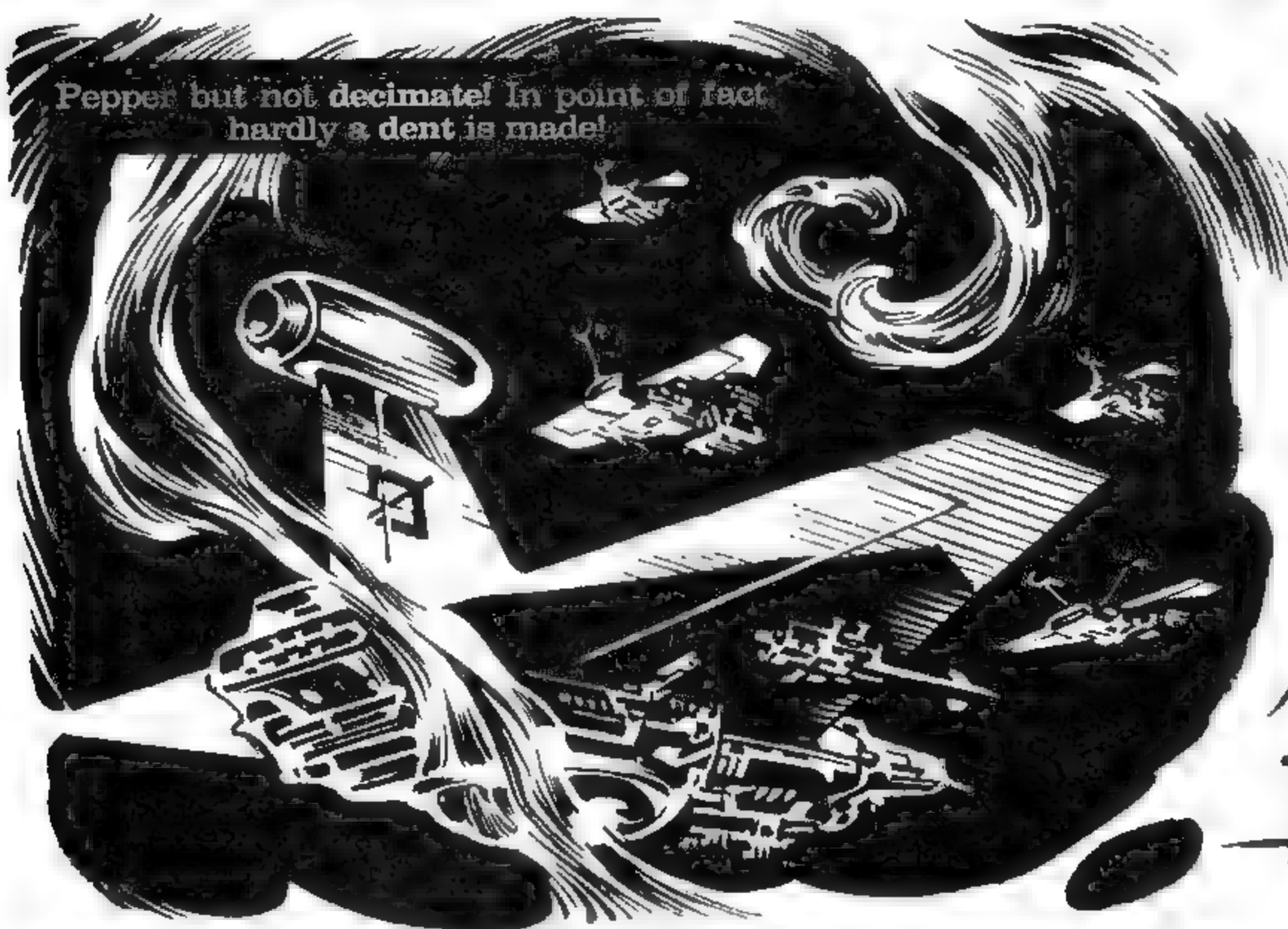
And all the gleaming
weaponry on each and
every gleaming piece of
military hardware is
aimed directly at

Spaceship Earth!

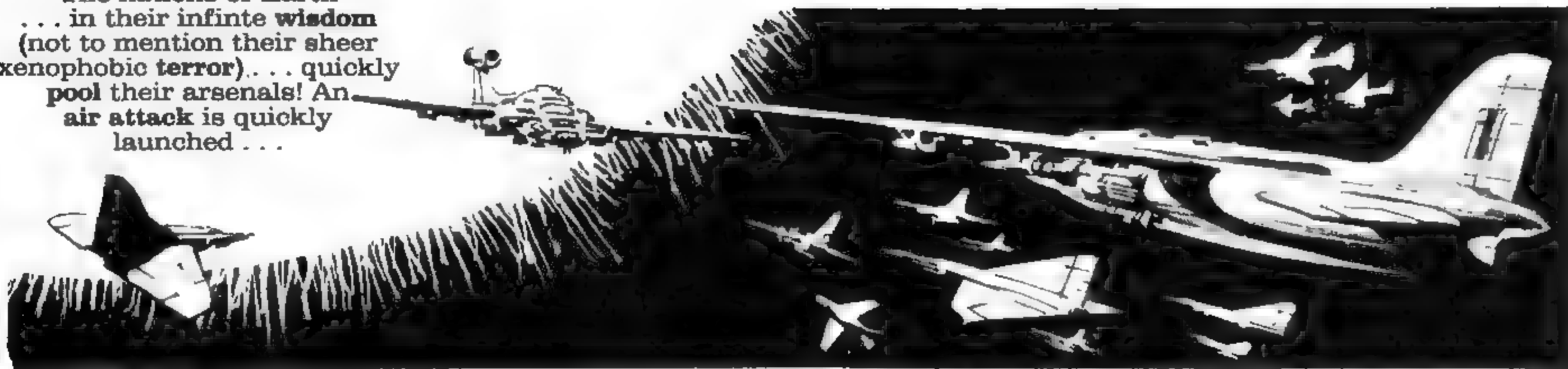
To glory,
my brothers! The
great Iron Gods of War,
smile upon us
this day!

THE KLANKS ARE COMING!
THE KLANKS ARE COMING!

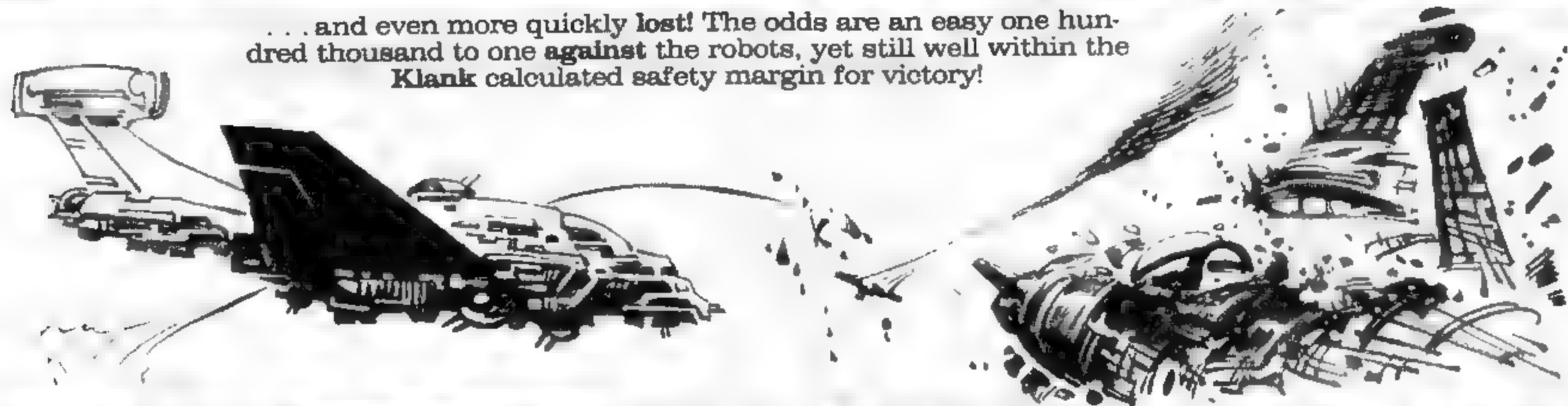
In the command flagship flying point for the task force, Colonel Klinker decides the chew on a cigar butt retrieved during a routine reconnaissance mission . . . even though he doesn't have the necessary programmed functional capacity/response to smoke the damned thing!



The nations of Earth
... in their infinite wisdom
(not to mention their sheer
xenophobic terror)... quickly
pool their arsenals! An
air attack is quickly
launched ...



... and even more quickly lost! The odds are an easy one hundred thousand to one against the robots, yet still well within the Klank calculated safety margin for victory!



The same is true on land

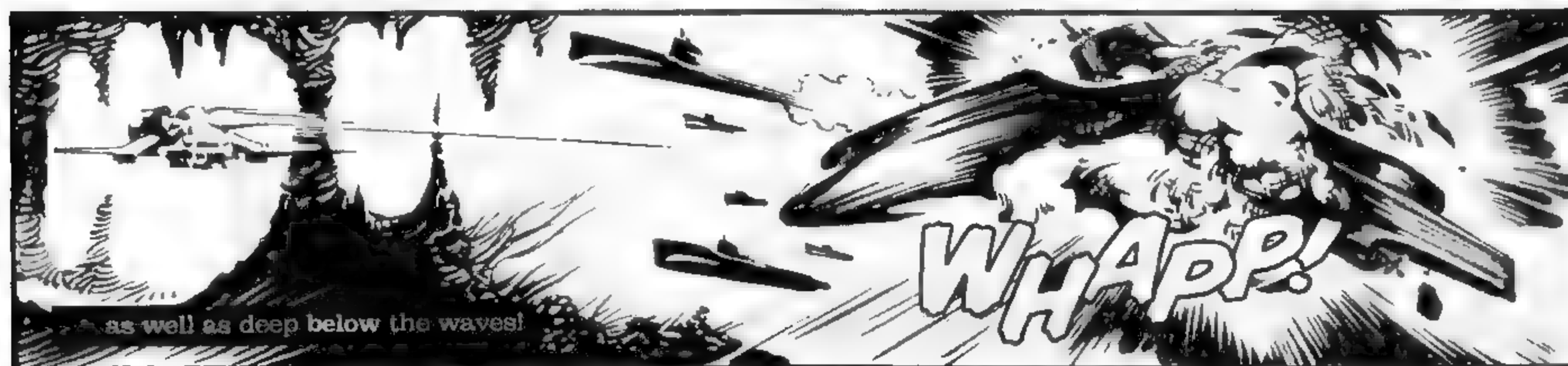
Take
that, fleshling
pigs!



at sea



as well as deep below the waves!



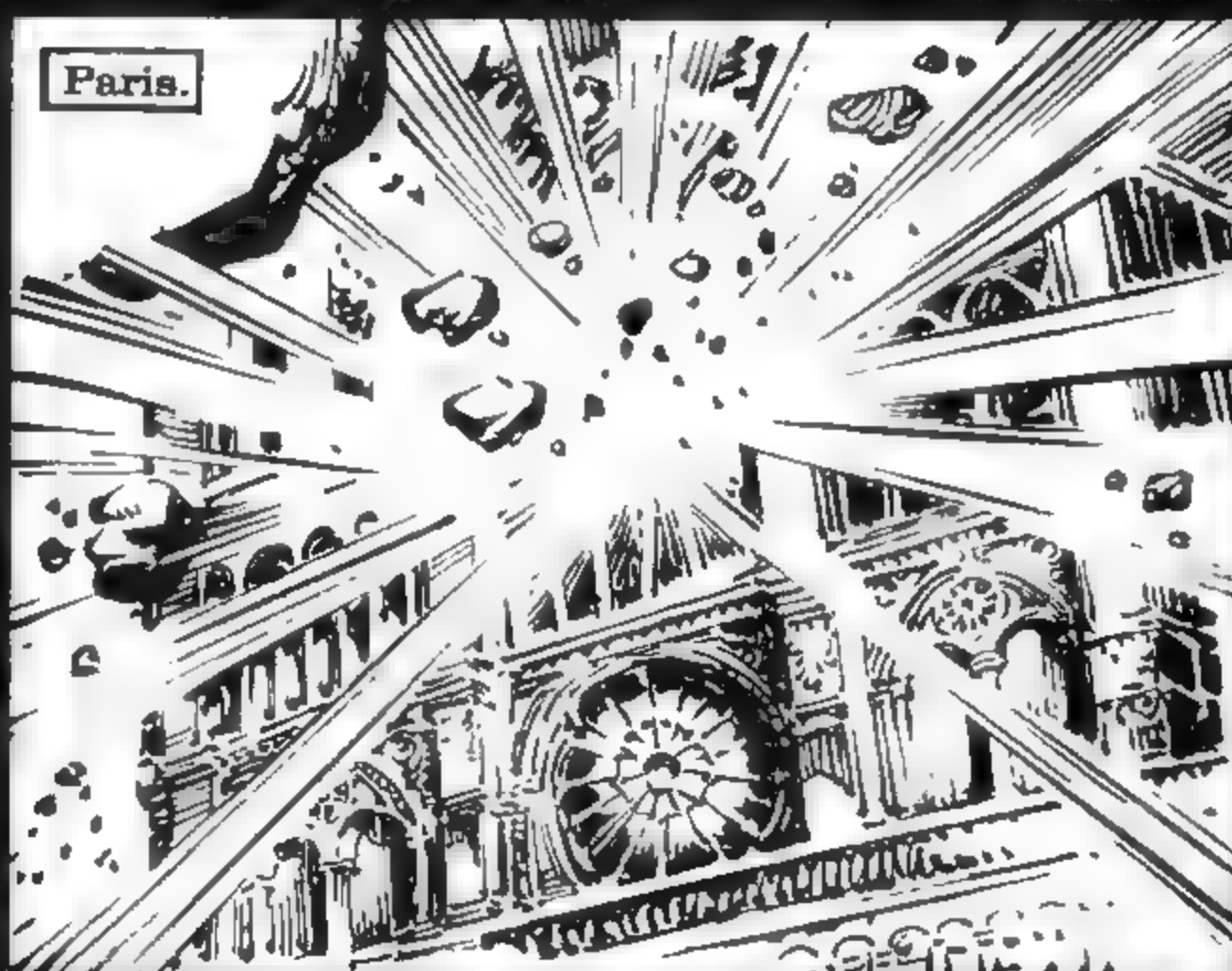
Colonel Klinker watches with smug satisfaction as the Klank warmachine rolls over every major Terran city!



London.



Paris.



Rome.



Washington.



Moscow.



Secaucus, New Jersey!







Blamed mechanized fightin' units... stabbin' us in the back! Us... whose almost kith an' kin!

Uh, Colonel, those human-controlled devices are called tanks!

Human controlled, eh? I should'a knowed!

Cellular Scum! Chew on this ion grenade!



An' this oughta keep the rest'a you shoddy junkpots busy!

Sir! the demolition team has just arrived!

So I see! About mother-loadin' time, too.

Haul them tin tails over here, ya value-shiftin' yahoos! We ain't got all stardate, y'know!

Way I got
it planned, you demolition
'bots are in for a treat! Them
plutonamite firecrackers are
gonna set off the biggest
explosion this side of a
super-nova!

The timer's
set, Colonel Klinker!
We've got exactly one
micron to evacuate!

You heard
the demo officer,
y'lube-shootin' pot-boilers!
get the lead out!

Move!
Move!
Move!!

One micron later, as the ar-
mada withdraws to a safe
distance in orbit, Earth
is

The command order to retreat is
flashed instantly to the fleet, and im-
mediately heeded.

...no more!

WAWAWA BAAAM!

It is sometime later when Colonel Klinker's excitedly clattering circuits have calmed sufficiently for him to address his victorious forces ...!

This's Colonel Klinker here! I just want you dogfaces to know that I'm damn proud'a you jokers!

The war games went real well this time 'round! In fact, these was the best maneuvers I've ever been on!

Once again we Klanks from the Ingot Empire have proved we got the best standin' ready reserve in the whole blasted galaxy!



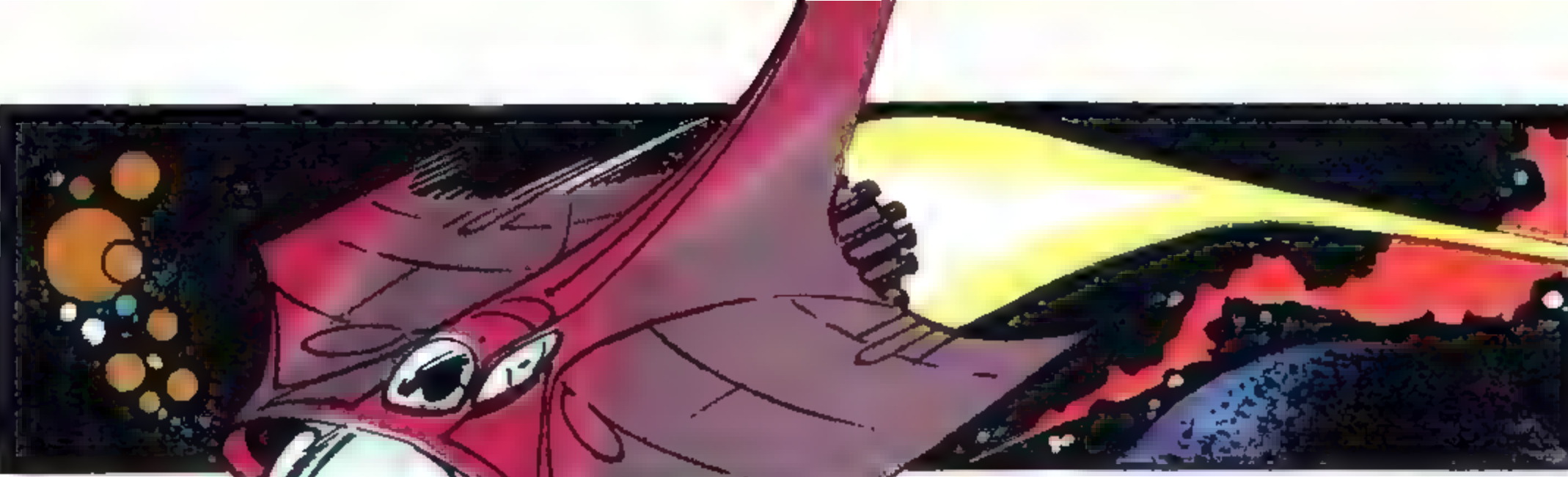
So until next sidereal year when we once again go through another of our annual trainin' exercises ... this's Colonel Klinker' signin' off!

... over ...

... an' ...

... out!






By the Terran year 2522, Earth colonists had been reaching out into the void of space for more than five centuries, taming new worlds, claiming more and more of the universe as their own. World-taming was a harsh, lonesome life. And all too often it ended with needless death!

That's the way it was for Allison Starfire and her nine-year-old daughter Kris. Settling upon a primitive out-world in the Ohrabach system, Allison tried to raise her daughter alone, while her husband patrolled the starlanes, making the sector safe for incoming colonists.

Allison Starfire was a tough woman. A good woman. She made only one fatal mistake in her lifetime. And that was in welcoming a small band of star-weary asteroid miners onto her isolated homestead. They repaid her kindness by sexually abusing her and young Kris. The miners then "thanked" the woman for her favors by gutting her alive, like a hunted, alien animal. They would have done the same to Kris if the child hadn't fled into the jungled hills.

Kris Starfire was nearly catatonic from shock and exposure by the time Sam Starfire had found her. Sam blamed himself, of course, for not being there when his wife and little girl needed him. He searched for the killers in the limitless, cold emptiness of space, but never found them.

When Sam buried Allison he made a solemn vow to himself that no harm would ever befall his little girl again.



Star pirates, Twiggy! They're tearing that old freighter apart!


We... we should go down! At least try to stop them! But Dad... Dad made me promise to back away from danger... always!

It was because of that very vow that Kris, sometimes known by the nickname Steamer, found herself, some years later, fleeing into the furthestmost frontiers of space.

The Starfire Saga

It's not right, Twiggy! I... I feel like a coward running... not helping when people are being murdered!

The problem began when Sam Starfire reasoned that the frontier would never be safe for his little girl. Not unless, that is, the child was given masculine skills; trained as Sam himself had been trained by the best warriors in the galaxy.



But the Academy . . . !
They must have alerted
the **Star Patrol** by now! They
know about Becker's death!
And they must think that
I killed him!

That . . . that's why I've got to leave you, little buddy. The patrols will be looking for this rocketrainer!

Reeeeee!

I . . . I'm sorry, Twiggy! But they'll be looking for you, too! This is where we must say goodbye!


They were not about to change their ways. Not for **Sam**. Not for all of the picketing feminists in each of the Elysian systems!

So, Sam reasoned, his little girl would just have to become "his little boy!"

Poor Twiggy! He doesn't understand any of it! This planet is populated. They'll find him . . . ! And maybe his next master will be smart enough to stay out of trouble!

Poor Twiggy! He doesn't understand **any** of it! This planet is populated. **They'll** find him . . . ! And maybe his **next** master will be smart enough to stay out of trouble!

to stay out of trouble!



With cropped blonde locks and boyish jaunt to her walk, Kris entered the Academy and rapidly became one of the most outstanding students ever to pilot a rocketrainer!


The first thing I've got to do is get some clothes! I left the Academy in such a hurry that all I've got is this fatigue shirt I was wearing when Becker attacked me!

Down there . . . those natives!



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some clothes! I left the Academy in such a hurry that all I've got is this fatigue shirt I was wearing when Becker attacked me!

Down there . . . those natives!

Hope they won't complain if I snatch a few pieces of their laundry! I need 'em more than they do!

Sam had no way of knowing that when Steamer's secret was finally discovered, that it would end with a boy's death and that it would make his own child a fugitive fleeing from justice!

Sam had no way of knowing that when Steamer's secret was finally discovered, that it would end with a boy's death and that it would make his own child a fugitive fleeing from justice!



You're doin' fine, Steam old girl! Purloining rags from peasants in the middle of God knows where!



With no food, no capital, no way to get to the frontier...

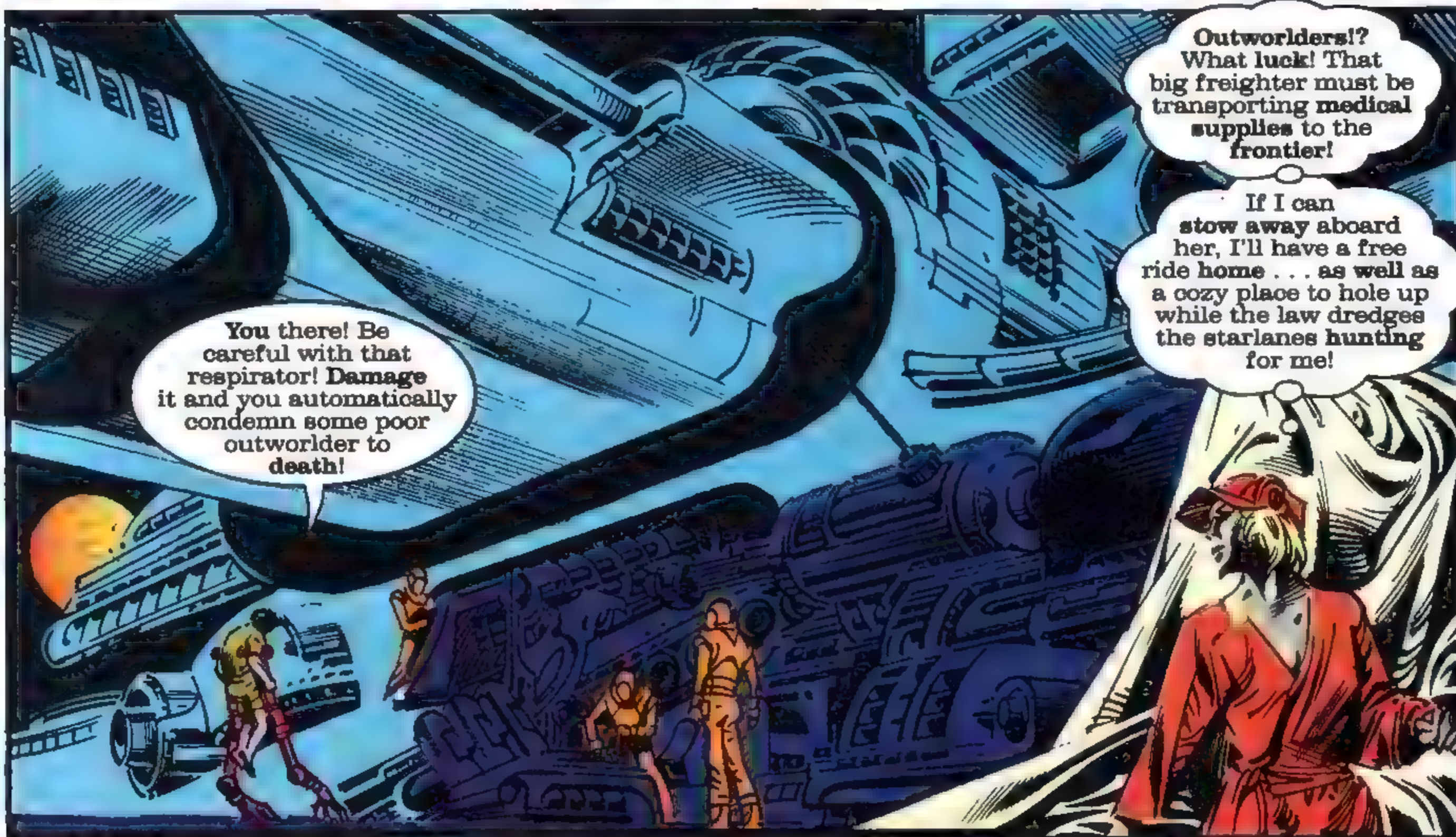


... and no way to find your old man ... even if you knew where to begin looking for him!



About the only thing I've got going for me is that the Star Patrols will be looking for a runaway cadet! I'll lay low, stay away from the cities, and even if they should catch me, I can always flash a little tit and deny ever being near the Academy!

First priority, though, is to find a fast ship to the out-worlds. The best place to do that is the Spaceport!



You there! Be careful with that respirator! Damage it and you automatically condemn some poor outworlder to death!

Outworlders!? What luck! That big freighter must be transporting medical supplies to the frontier!

If I can stow away aboard her, I'll have a free ride home ... as well as a cozy place to hole up while the law dredges the starlanes hunting for me!

The dockworkers labor through the night, filling the cargo bays of the mammoth freighter. Steamer begins to wonder if she will ever have the opportunity to sneak aboard. But then . . . just before the dawn, the galactic teamsters complete their work, and the stillness which inevitably accompanies a new day blankets the spaceport with a gentle silence.

It's now or never, hotshot!

You'd better move your boyish little behind . . . or miss out on this one-of-a-kind sale on bargain air fares . . .!

Squeezing in through an ion takeoff tube does have its drawbacks!

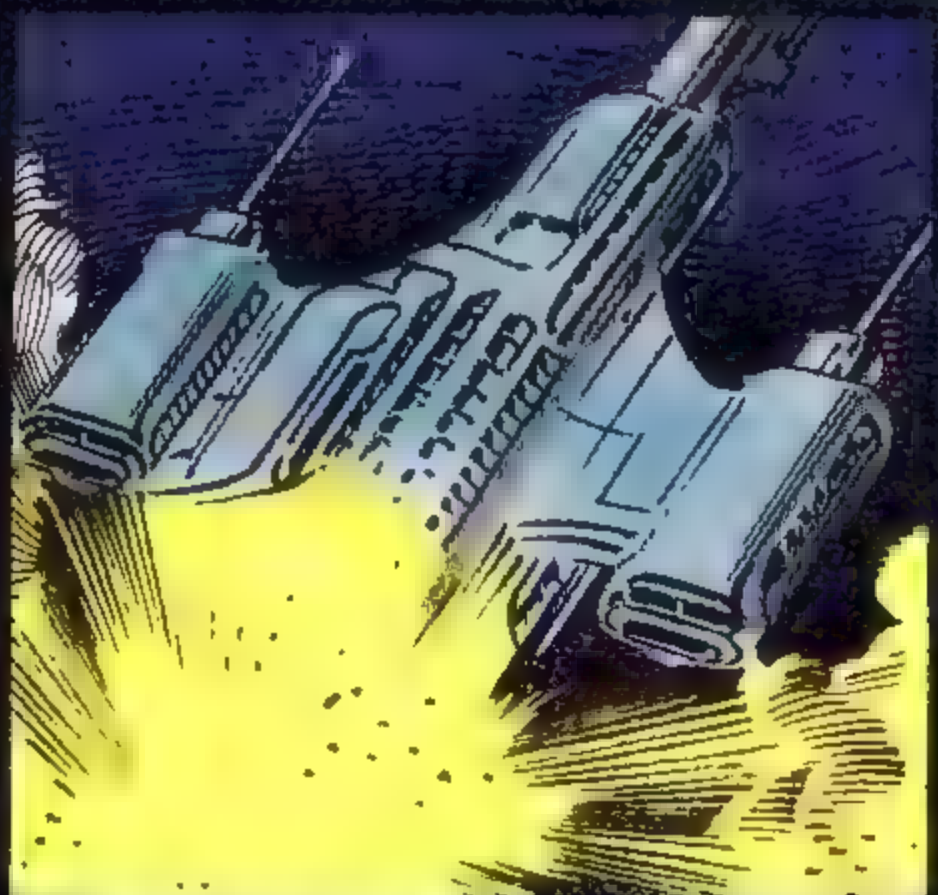
If for some reason the ship were to blast off now, there'd be one deep-fried Steamer Starfire splattered all over the launch pad!

The cargo hold should be just on the other side of these ventilation ducts!

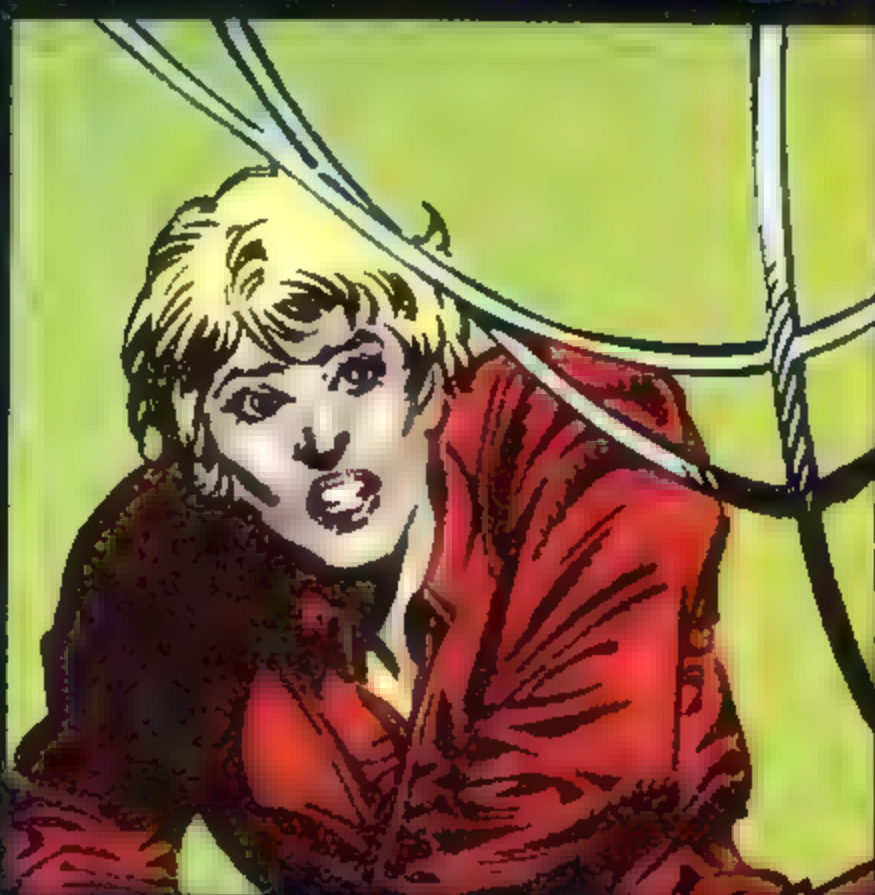
This is what I need! Once the freight is loaded and the bay secured . . . they won't open it again until the ship reaches its destination!

Ahhhhhh! It's not the Hiatusphere Hilton, but it beats hell out of spending the night with a Star Patrol interrogation team!

Sleep drifts upon the weary girl with an eerie rapidity. Though she has not rested in what seems like days, her slumber is fitful and haunted by the nightmarish vision of a dead boy's face: his eyes bulging in horror, a gaping, smoldering hole in his back exposing crisp, laser-fried organs!



Within her nightmare, the dead boy screams. But in reality, it is the unearthly scream of engines straining for take off!



The girl bolts upright, instantly awake, her eyes wide with fear, her mind filled with the cloudy numbness of sleep

And then she remembers. She is safe. Alone. Aboard an ion-powered star freighter streaking at more than twelve times the speed of light towards the deep galactic frontier. Home!



Ohhhhhh!

But is she safe? Or alone?



You ... you gave me a start!

Who ... who are you? What are you doing here?

I might be askin' you the same thing, darlin'!

Me name is P. J. O'Connors! An' I been follorin' ya ever since y'ditched yer star-trainer!

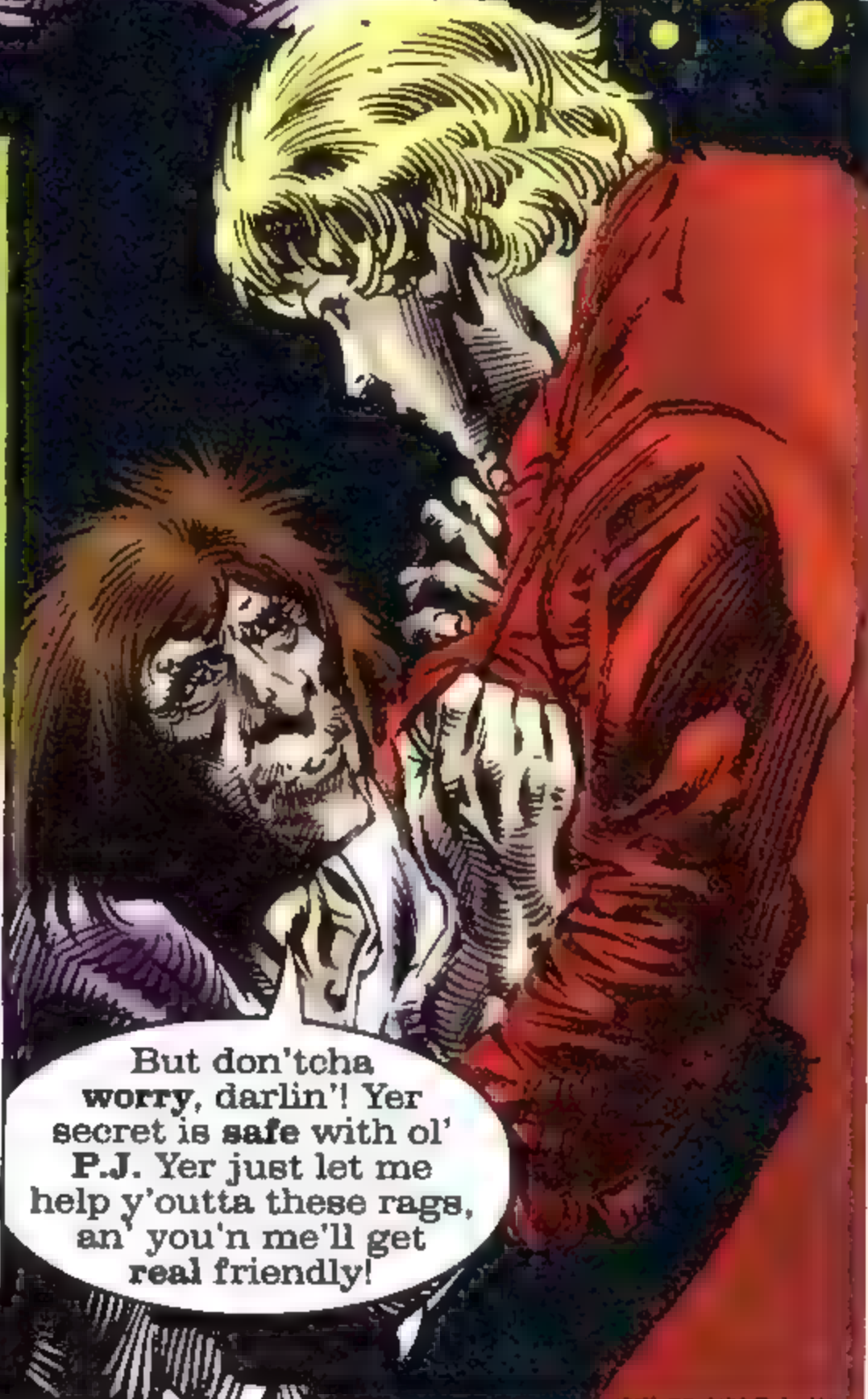


I been hearin' th'news reports, lass! An' I figured it all out 'round 'bout th'time yer was pinchin' these fancy rags!



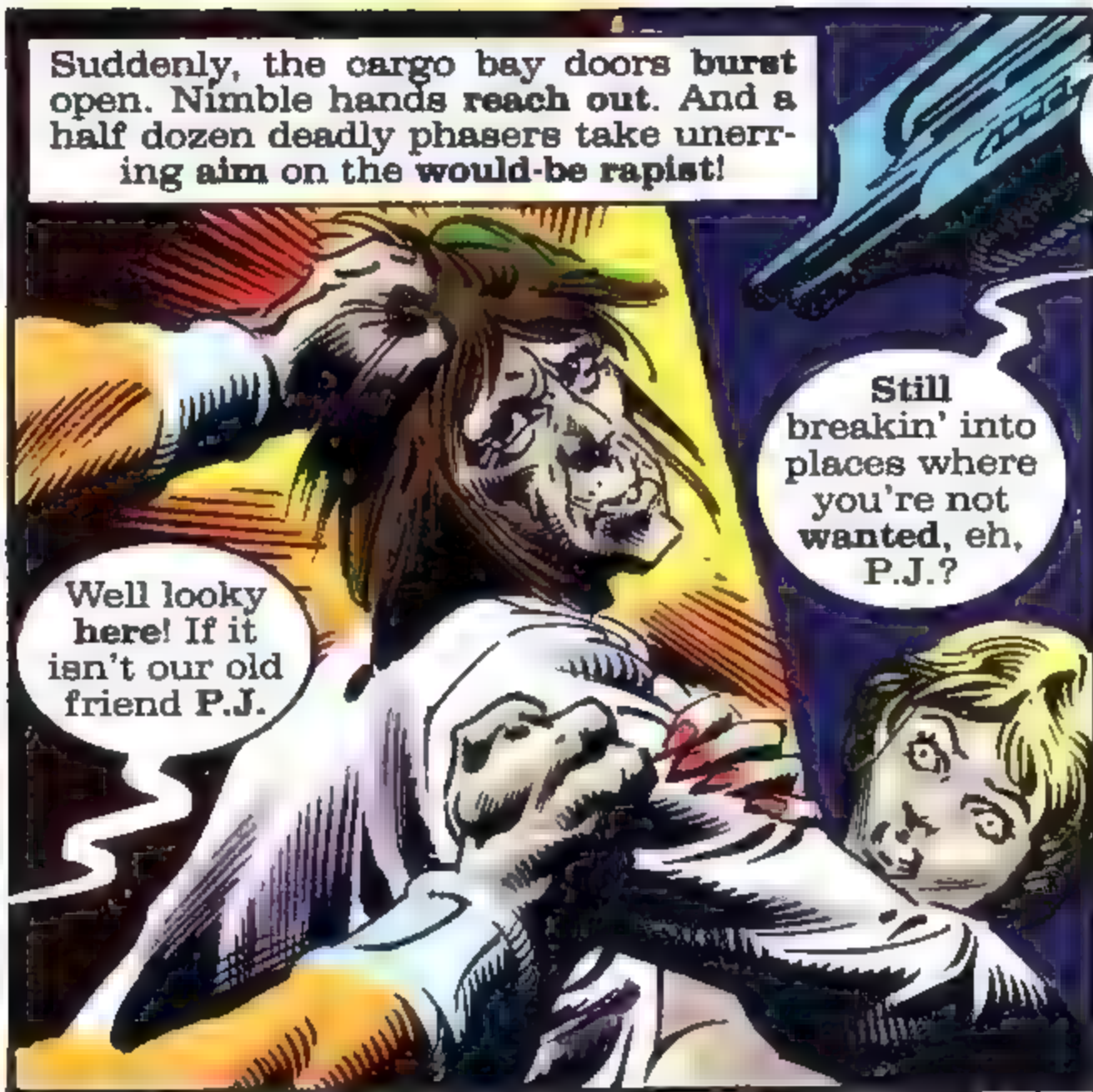
Haha! Imagine! A wee lassie in the Academy!

No wonder yer killed that boy, eh, love?! He found out yer little secret ...!



But don'tcha worry, darlin'! Yer secret is safe with ol' P.J. Yer just let me help y'outta these rags, an' you'n me'll get real friendly!





Suddenly, the cargo bay doors burst open. Nimble hands reach out. And a half dozen deadly phasers take unerring aim on the would-be rapist!

Well looky here! If it isn't our old friend P.J.

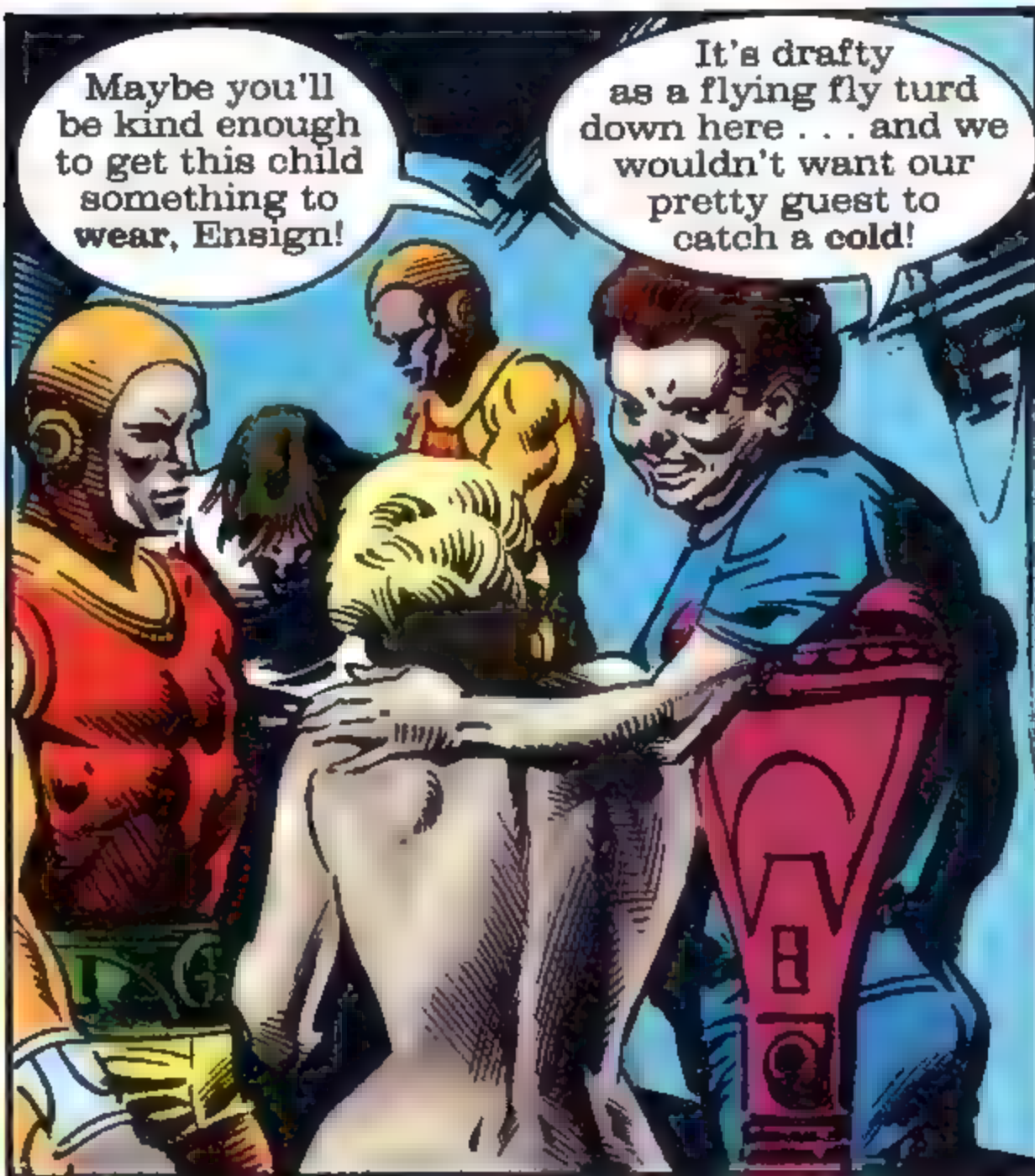
Still breakin' into places where you're not wanted, eh, P.J.?



Teh! Teh! Captain's gonna be upset when he hears about this one!

And you know what the Captain does when he's upset, P.J. You'll be lucky if he doesn't shove you into the jettison tubes!

You okay, miss? It's fortunate we heard you scream. There's no telling what this pervert would have done after he'd had his way with you.



Maybe you'll be kind enough to get this child something to wear, Ensign!

It's drafty as a flying fly turd down here . . . and we wouldn't want our pretty guest to catch a cold!



I'm Dr. Snufflesmith, child. Folks just call me Dr. Sniffles. And that sperm bag is one of the most vicious freight hoppers in the quadrant.

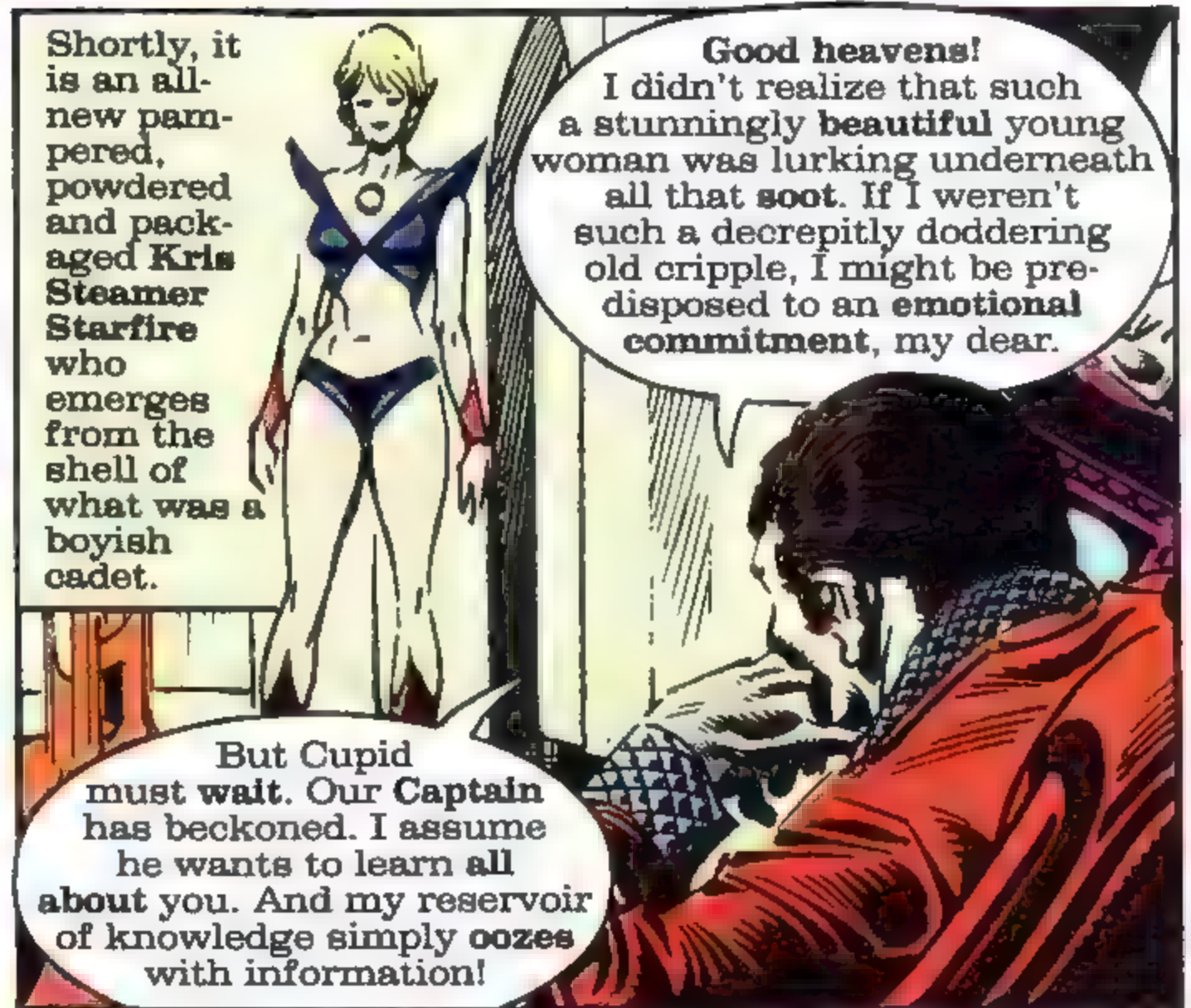
Whenever O'Connors stows aboard, inevitably a body is left behind.

But don't worry. He can't hurt you now. Come. Let me look at you, child. You look like you could use a good meal.



Not the talkative sort, are you, my dear? No need to be, really. Not with someone like me around. People say I never shut up!

You just enjoy your meal. Prunella here will dig up something pretty for you. Then, if you feel like it, we'll talk!

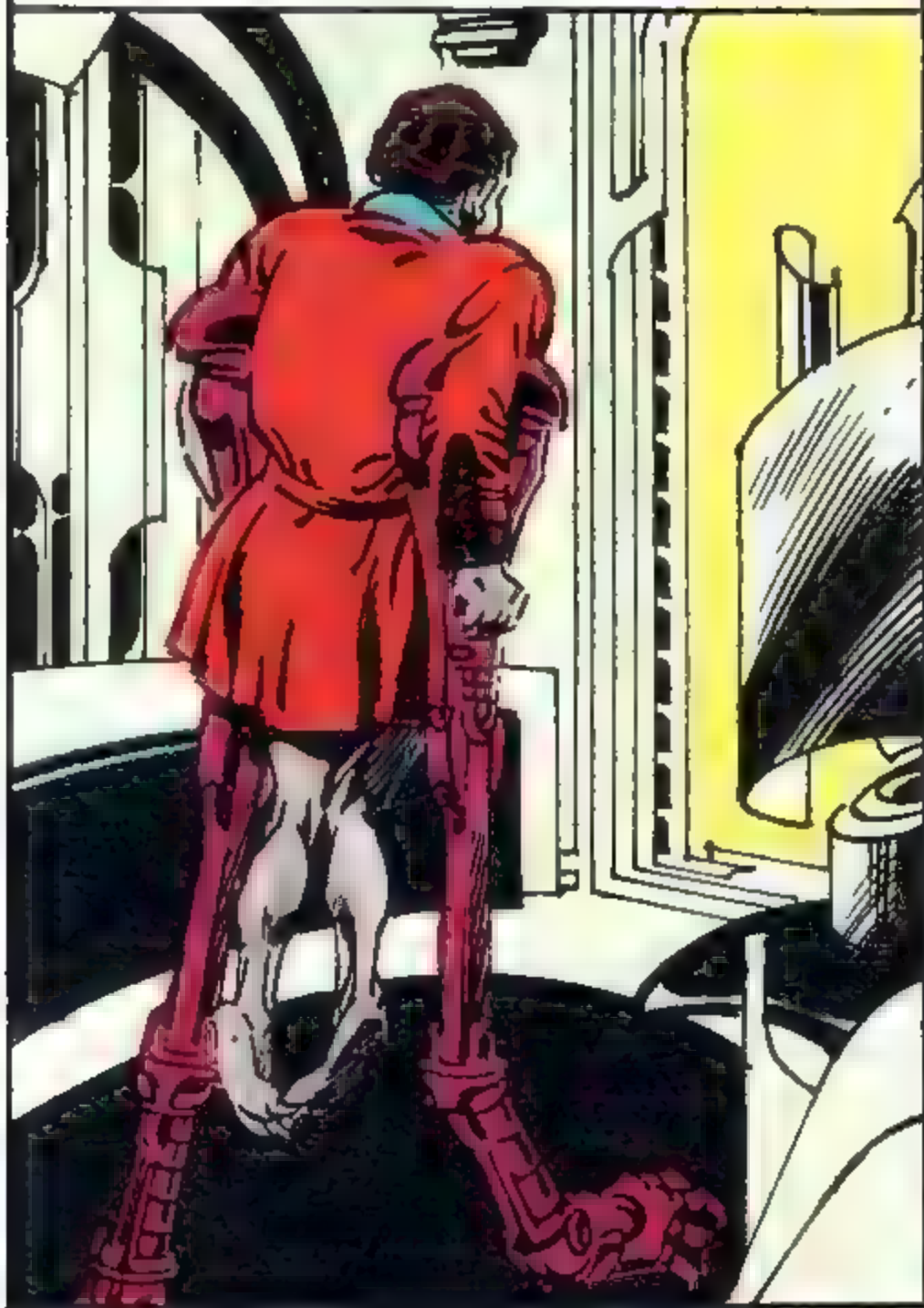


Shortly, it is an all-new pampered, powdered and packaged Kris Steamer Starfire who emerges from the shell of what was a boyish cadet.

Good heavens! I didn't realize that such a stunningly beautiful young woman was lurking underneath all that soot. If I weren't such a decrepitly doddering old cripple, I might be predisposed to an emotional commitment, my dear.

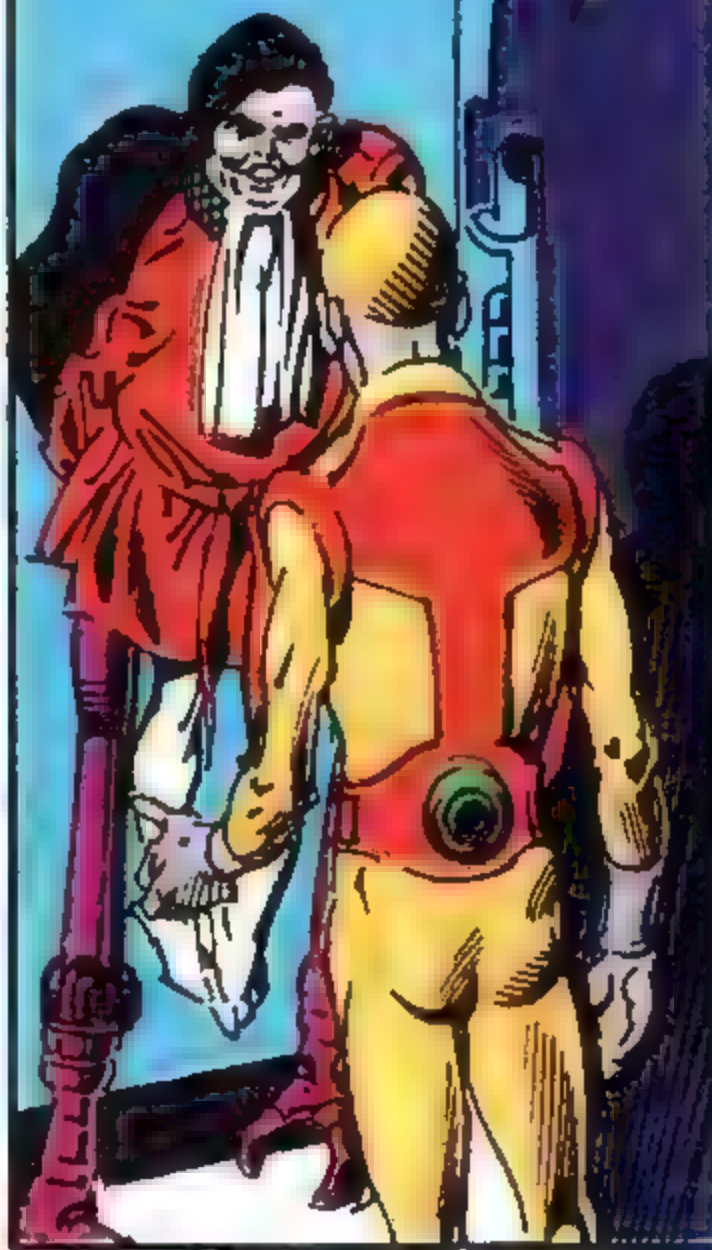
But Cupid must wait. Our Captain has beckoned. I assume he wants to learn all about you. And my reservoir of knowledge simply oozes with information!

The paraplegic physician smiles good-naturedly, then hobbles anxiously towards the Captain's bay. Though he knows virtually **nothing** about the pretty young stowaway, he is confident that she will **confide** in him once he has **earned** her trust!



Well . . . if it isn't the busiest star captain this side of Andromeda.

Sniffy, you spastic old twit! Why haven't you been around to see me?



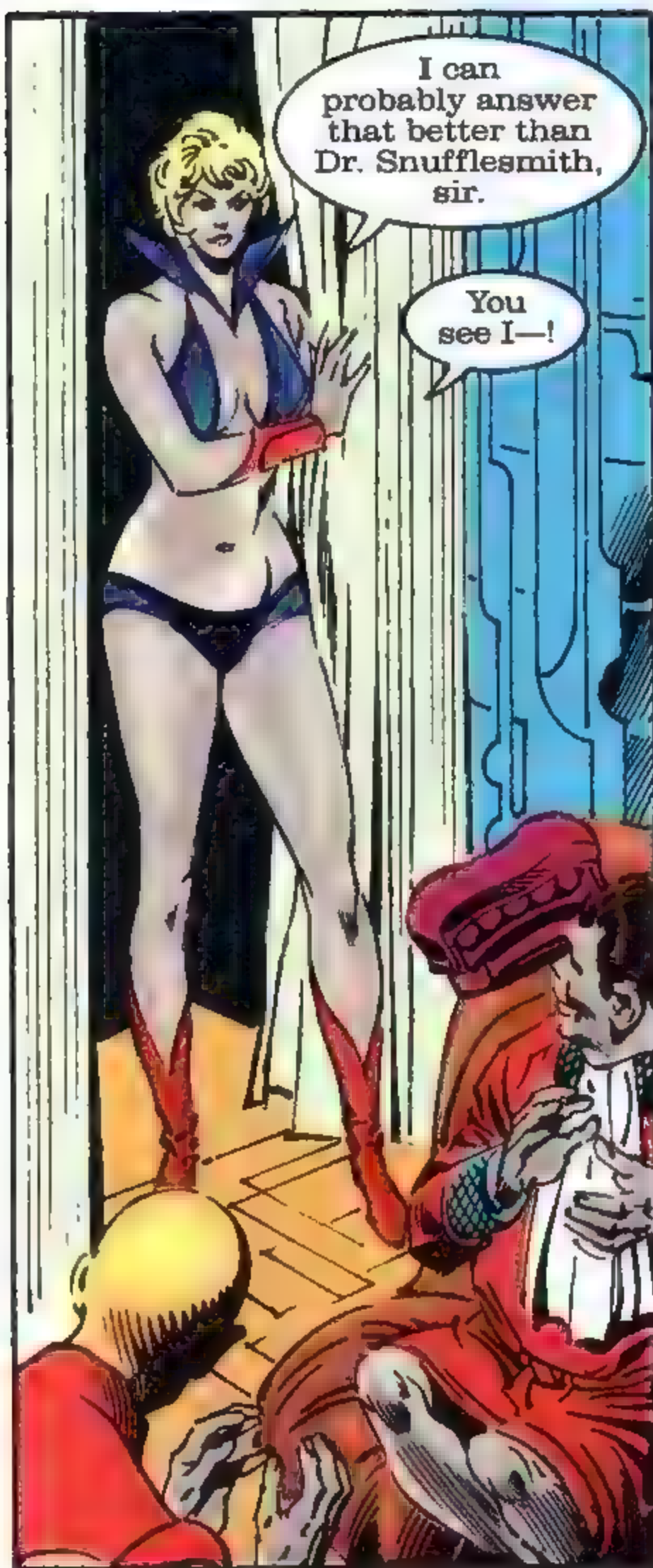
What!? And take valuable time away from the exotic little beauty I've ensconced away in my quarters? It's my body that's warped, old friend . . . not my mind!

Tell me about the girl, Sniff . . . ! What's she doing on the Sunblaster?



I can probably answer that better than Dr. Snufflesmith, sir.

You see I—!



But Steamer is destined **never** to finish her statement. For, suddenly, the pulpish, broken body of a starsailor flies through the bay's thick metal wall



Good lord! What . . . what in God's name is happening?



We . . . we're being attacked by star pirates!



The Starfire Saga continues next issue!

GHITA

OF ALIZARR

BY FRANK THORNE

It is before the dawn of written history . . . the Antediluvian age. Deep in the purple forest of Azza, with fallen Alizarr far behind, Ghita, Thenef and Dahib bathe in a quiet tributary of the mighty Zorr river. The night before, in a tunnel beneath the streets of Alizarr, Ghita and Thenef met Dahib, the halftroll. Dahib, using the great strength in his teeth and talons, formed the armor of Khan-Dagon to fit Ghita's body. Then, armed with weapons taken from the tombs of the dead heroes of Alizarr, the trio executed a midnight attack upon a group of trolls guarding a corral near the tunnel exit. Ghita was savage and stunning with her use of the sword of Khan-Dagon. They stole three horses . . . then rode north in to the dark forest.



Throughout the morning meal, Ghita expounds upon her vision of ridding Alizarr of the trespassers. She is electrifying. Plans for battle flow from her lips. She punctuates each new idea with thrusts and mighty swings with the sword of Khan-Dagon.

We would need an army of fools to attempt such a thing.

Fools, perhaps. If so, I'll start by recruiting you, Thenef.

Holy one, I confess to being the lowest among fools. Let me be the first to serve.

There! See, Thenef? Dahib is wise, yet confesses to being a fool!

If it be an army we need, let us ride swiftly to the caverns 'neath the high mountains to the north. . . !

Many of my kind have taken refuge in those caves after escaping the slavery of trollish Zephyran.

We Halftrolls are not great in number, but we are good fighters. Especially against Trolls.

They journey toward the mountains. It is two day's ride from Alizarr, and Ghita continues to outline siege routes and assault tactics. The setting sun finds them halfway to their goal, and weary from the trip.

Enough! I can go no further this day. Have mercy on old bones.

Just so, my wilting daisy. This spot appears ideal for a campsite.

Goddess, I will forage for fire wood and victuals.



Excellent dinner, good Dahib. You make even the most rustic of edibles fit for a monarch.

I think he liked the feed, Dahib.

Brruupp!

So did I.

Thank you, wizard. Thank you, my hallowed one. Let us finish the evening with a few turns at sotweed.



By the seven sorcerers of Minga! We haven't puffed the weed since showdays.



It was nine moons ago! Our troupe was in Baalzarra. We were entertaining in the royal court. I did the ecstasy dance so many times that my nubs were sore for a fortnight.



Aye. Aye. When Ghita dances 'tis easy to pick the pockets of oglers in the audience.



One hundred twenty drakis, six gold chains, five silver phials, and a ruby the size of your thumb! A splendid take in three day's time.



The dance of ecstasy. . . ! What is it like, my goddess?



Ghita! We'll do a show for this most splendid of Halftrolls. We've him to thank for picking the weed and making the pipe.

Thenef takes center stage again, although it be in the secluded depths of the Azzian forest. Ghita and the wizard had traveled the length and breadth of the kingdom with a troupe of players. Thenef did magic tricks and juggled. Ghita danced and played the Oodina. Both joined the cast in plays, mimes and lusty rites of Tammuz worship.

Lay-dees and Half-trolls!

Presenting, for your delectation—Thenef, the greatest, and Ghita of Alizarr with her famous Dance of Ecstasy!

Thenef first saw young Ghita during a tour of Urd to the south of Alizarr. She had joined the troupe as a dancer. The wizard befriended the girl, they shared quarters. He protected her and made her shattered life secure.

The players knew he bedded with the maid. They passed no judgement upon them. But seeing the older man and the girl together made them wonder. There seemed no outward signs of affection between the two.

After several years with the troupe, Ghita drifted to the brothels of Alizarr. Thenef followed. She became indifferent, while he aspired to become the resident of the royal wizard's tower.



The effect of sotweed still lingers, but as Ghita takes the sword, her mood changes.

Aye! Ghita, the whore-goddess will ride in triumph through the streets of Alizarr!

The buffoonery is at an end. She spins into a black mood of delirious fury.

Listen! I hear them! A slimy trollish patrol has found our camp!

Thenef! Dahib! See them? They surround us!

The blade whistles through the night air. Again and again Khan-Dagon's sword crashes through the shadows.

The wizard can see only shadows. Dahib leaps to Ghita's defense, but he, too, finds the shadows empty of demons!

They increase a hundredfold and be in demon form! I know them, every one. . . !

I looked into their faces as I lay on my back for eight moons in the brothels of Alizarr!

Khan-Dagon! Can you hear me? The royal mistress again slays the lizard-men of Zephyran. I . . .

. . . Th-Thenef!

The purple forest of Azza engulfed hundreds of square miles of flatland as it rambled north from Alizarr. Nepthys lay at its northernmost limits. The mammoth trees marched far to the east, past Mung and beyond Mt. Karazza. The western edge of the forest nugged the shores of lake Zephyran. It was like an engine of creation. Its steamy wildwood continually produced species of plant and beast that confounded the best scholars of the Antediluvian age. Of the innovations of the forest, none was so spectacular as the Unicorn of Azza! The existence of the huge, graceful white animal was whispered about in the villages along the Zorr river as it flirted with the dark woodlands. Few had seen it. This night, their select number was increased by three.



Stay! The creature will do us no harm.



It be Ghibelline, the Unicorn of Azza. He has searched this forest for three hundred years.





Baal's bum!
He is like a
great wood-
land Delty!

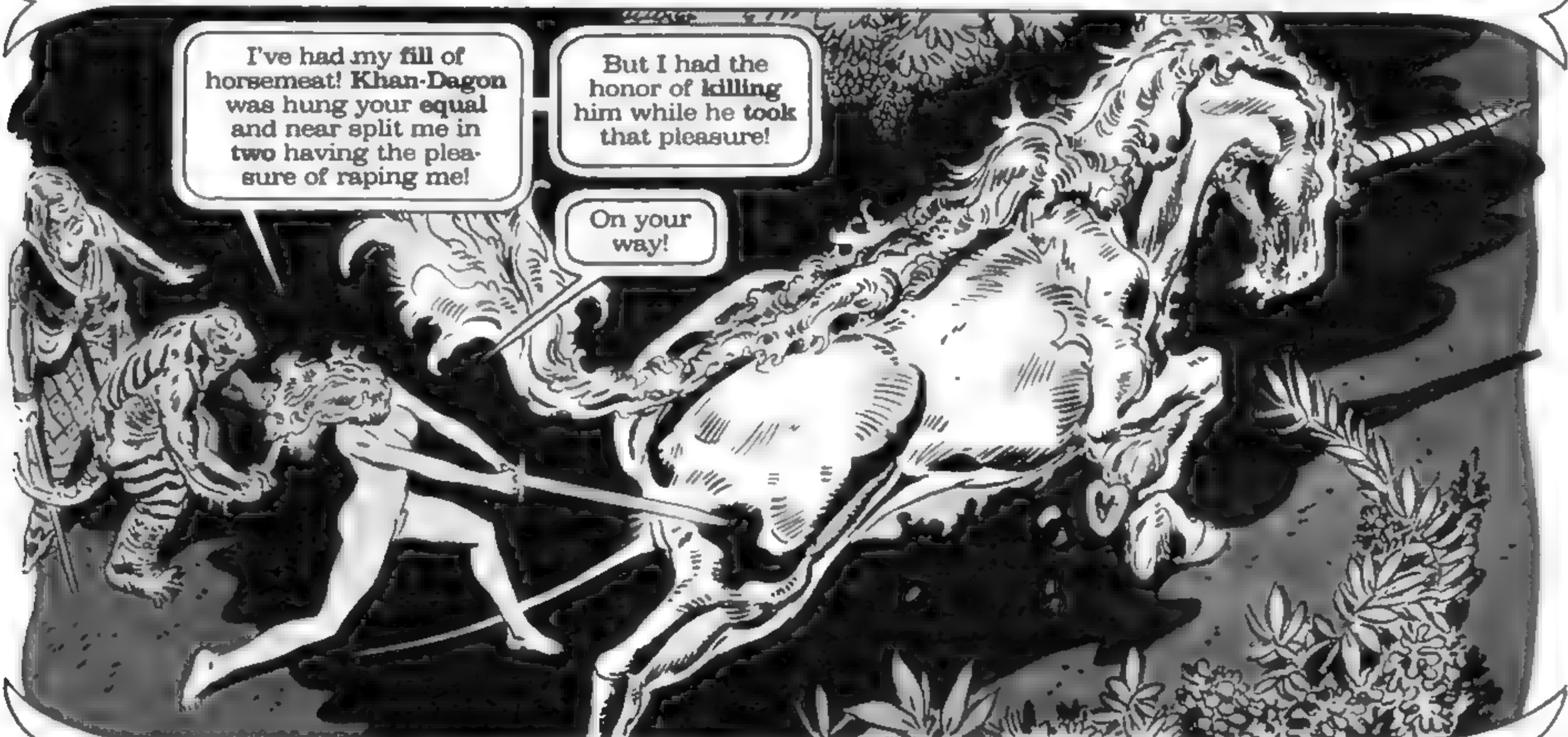
I have heard of such
beasts. Dahib, what is
it that he seeks?

Methinks his
search is over. He
has found you, my
goddess . . . a woman
of purity and spot-
less virtue. He
wishes to mate and
sire a new race of
celestial beings.



That's a belly laugh! A fine
herd of whore-spawn would
march from this jungle as
result of that union!

Ghita's
virtue is
her impur-
ity! She is
perfectly
soiled! Do
you hear,
unicorn?



I've had my fill of
horsemeat! Khan-Dagon
was hung your equal
and near split me in
two having the plea-
sure of raping me!

But I had the
honor of killing
him while he took
that pleasure!

On your
way!



You speak too
often ill of
yourself, little
pipkin. You are
a beautiful and
desirable woman.

Thank you, sweet
wizard. But other
than you, all men have
desired me only for
the offering of my
skills abed.



Now Ghita has a
new skill. This
blade makes my
bosom and cranny
less desirable by
a cubit of steel.

The sword will
change things a
bit. But I can
not change my
past. I wish
much of it were
not so.

Perhaps I should have
slain the horned beast
for reminding me of
what I am.

The crisp morning gives way to a steamy afternoon as the three ride north through the forest. Nephtys, the city of Thenef's birth, lay ahead. Beyond were the mountains and the caverns of Drome. Few in Nephtys realized the heights to which the priest's son had risen as royal wizard of Alizarr. It was said that as result of the murder of his young wife, Thenef had picked up with a young whoring wench and fallen to thievery and misdeeds. Thenef's father felt his son was possessed of the devil. in the form of a wanton woman.



Yonder is Mount Karazza.

It be a half-day's journey to the caverns.

We might put up in Nephtys for the night. Thenef, you must know of lodgings there.

Aye. There be an inn near town. They would welcome three such distinguished travelers.

It be a fine place to refill my flask, as well!

By tomorrow noon we should be recruiting soldiers from Dahib's clan in the caverns.

An easy task, my goddess.

How many of your kin could join us in the overthrow of Alizarr?

Not enough to darken the skies with arrows. We will need gather more for a proper attack.

And pluck ten wagonloads of arms from thin air!



Enough angry men will breed weapons enough.

Enough fools will breed fools enough!

A sad trick! 'Tis a dead dog. It be mangled badly. We must tell the owner of the pub.

Like botflies suspended in the air of a hot afternoon, three renegade Trolls hover over an unspeakable scene of carnage. The patrons and owner of the inn lay slaughtered upon the blood-soaked floor. It is a silent tableau of horror. Ghita's restraint is majestic—a triumph of control over seething emotion.



Thenef . . . Dahib!
Keep your blades
sheathed—for now.

I do not think
they understand
our speech . . .



. . . but there is
something they
will understand.



Grunn na
ga bnn el!



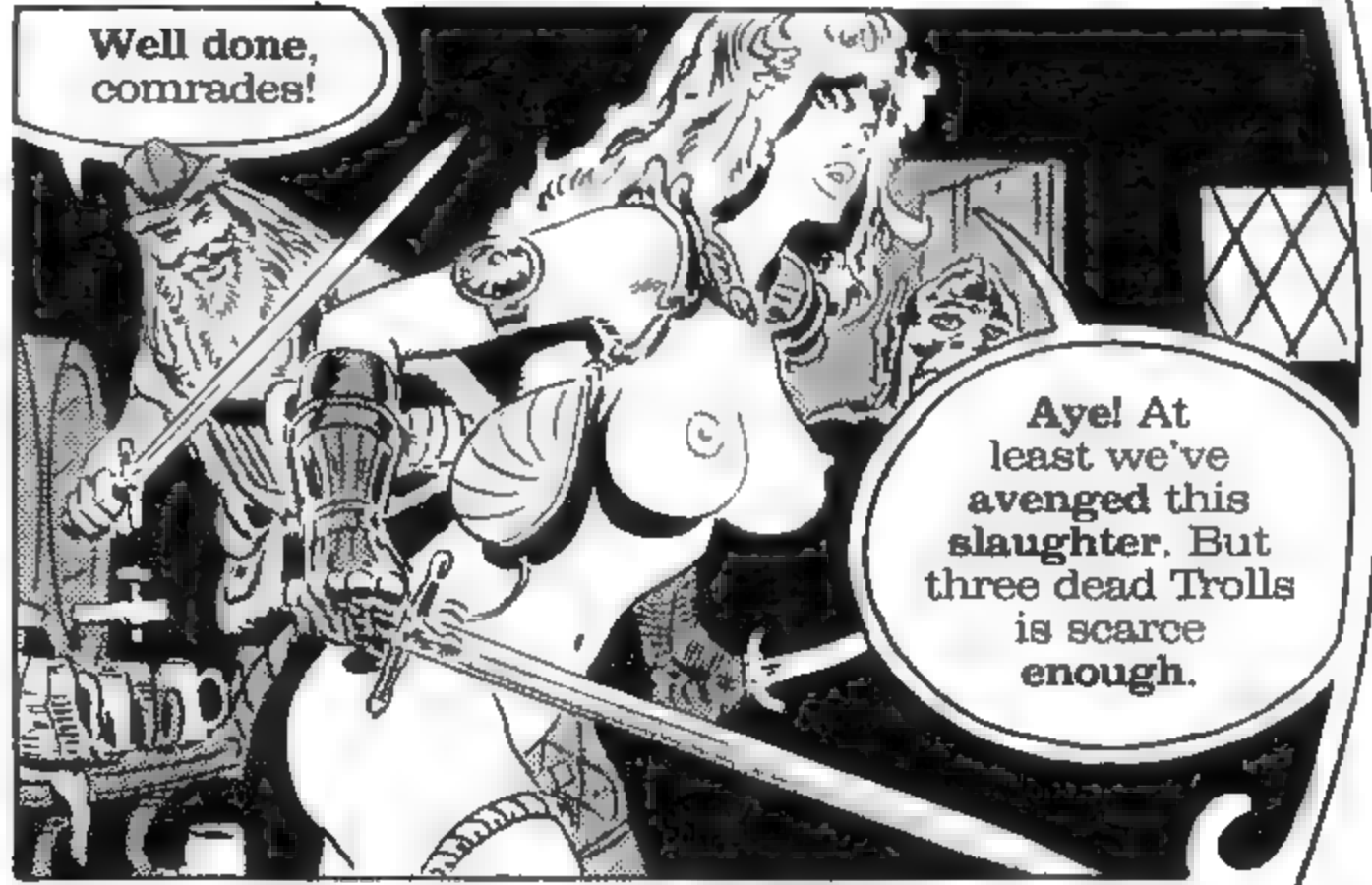
Ghita's breasts were like a siren's song across the ages. They were fullness to perfection, and the maid of Alizarr was a virtuoso at flaunting their fatal allure.



The blade of Khan-Dagon tastes blood once again. For Ghita, each thrust is an echo of the violent sexual act in the tombs of Alizarr that caused the spirit of the legendary warrior-general to lurk within her body.



Well done, comrades!



Aye! At least we've avenged this slaughter. But three dead Trolls is scarce enough.

Soon we will see dead Trolls stacked like cordwood, my goddess.



And these poor souls that were murdered. . . ! Perhaps you will allow them to enter Heaven. Have mercy on them, my goddess.



Heaven! That's a jest of Hell, and the babble of fools. . . !

Ghita dips her sword into a pool of Trollian blood, then slowly raises it alongside the magical gem called the Eye of Tammuz.



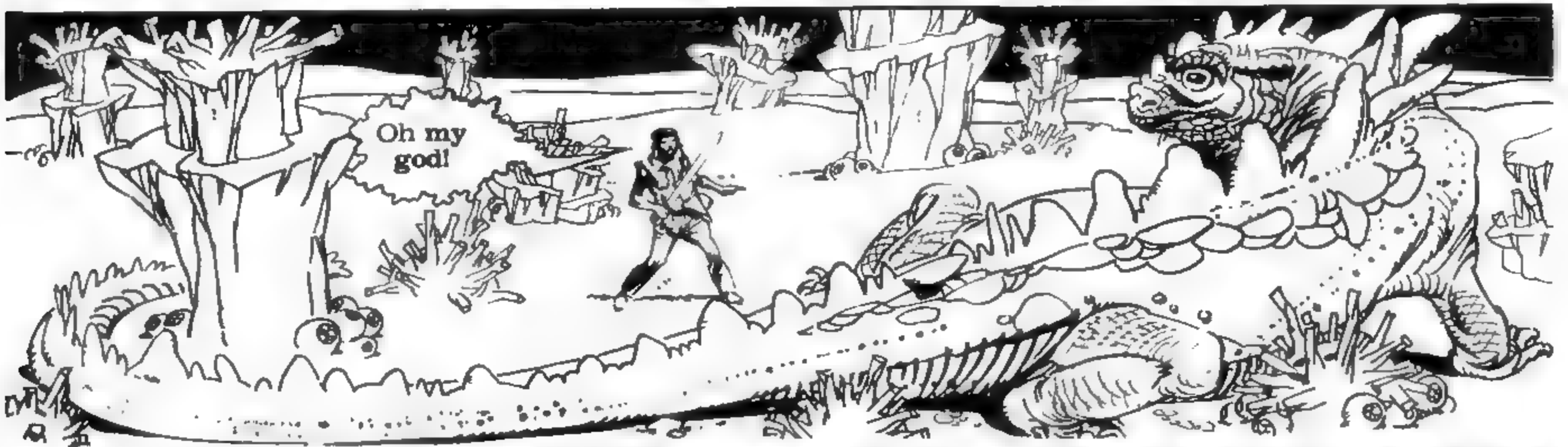
But Ghita has the power of life in this gem, and death in this saber. Call that Heaven and Hell and I'll agree!

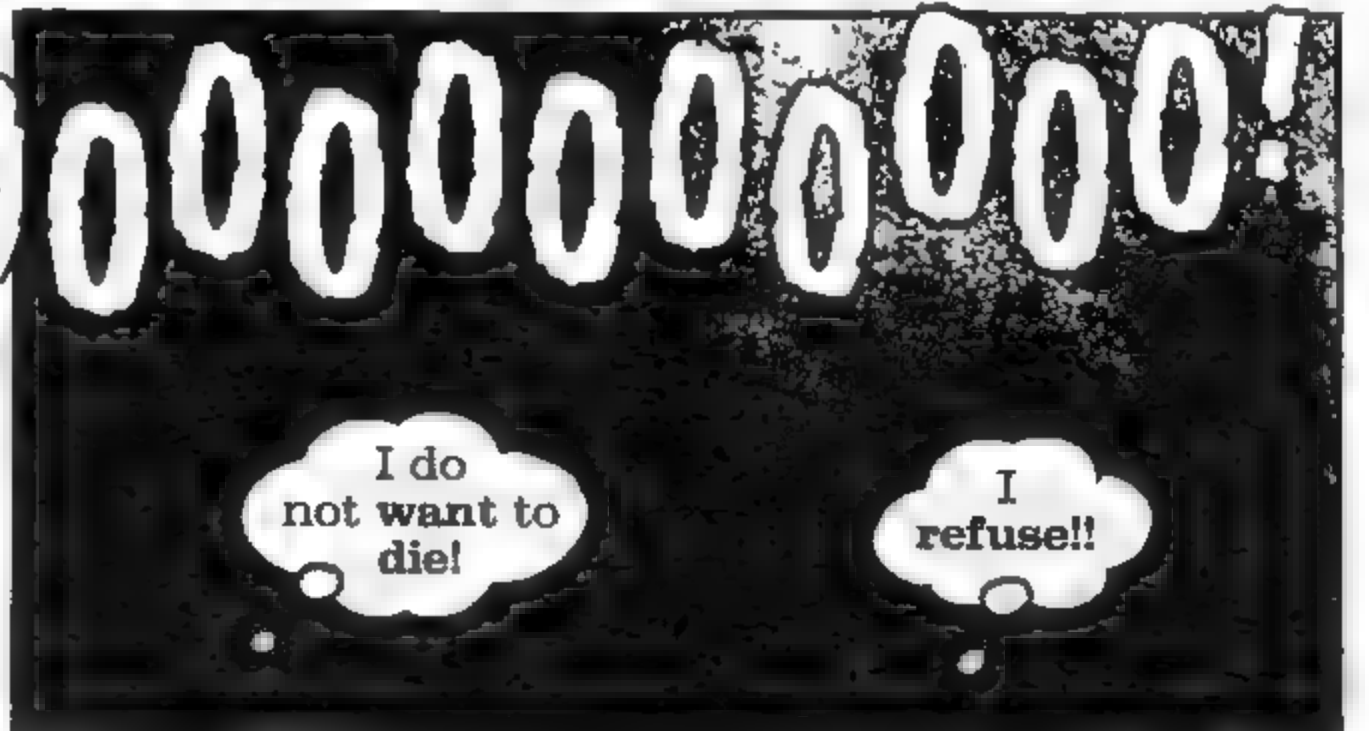
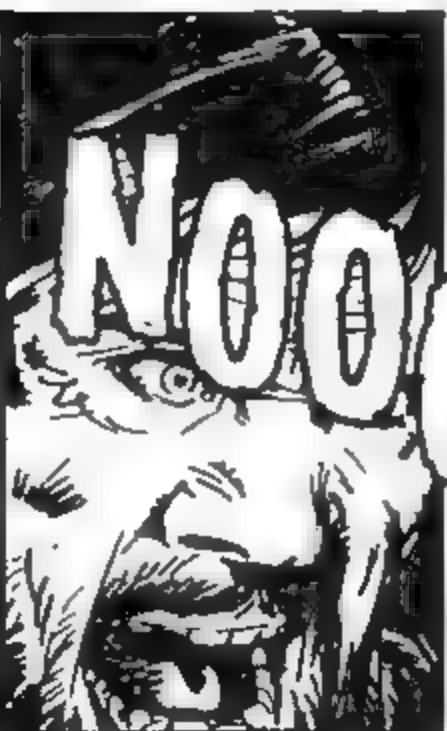
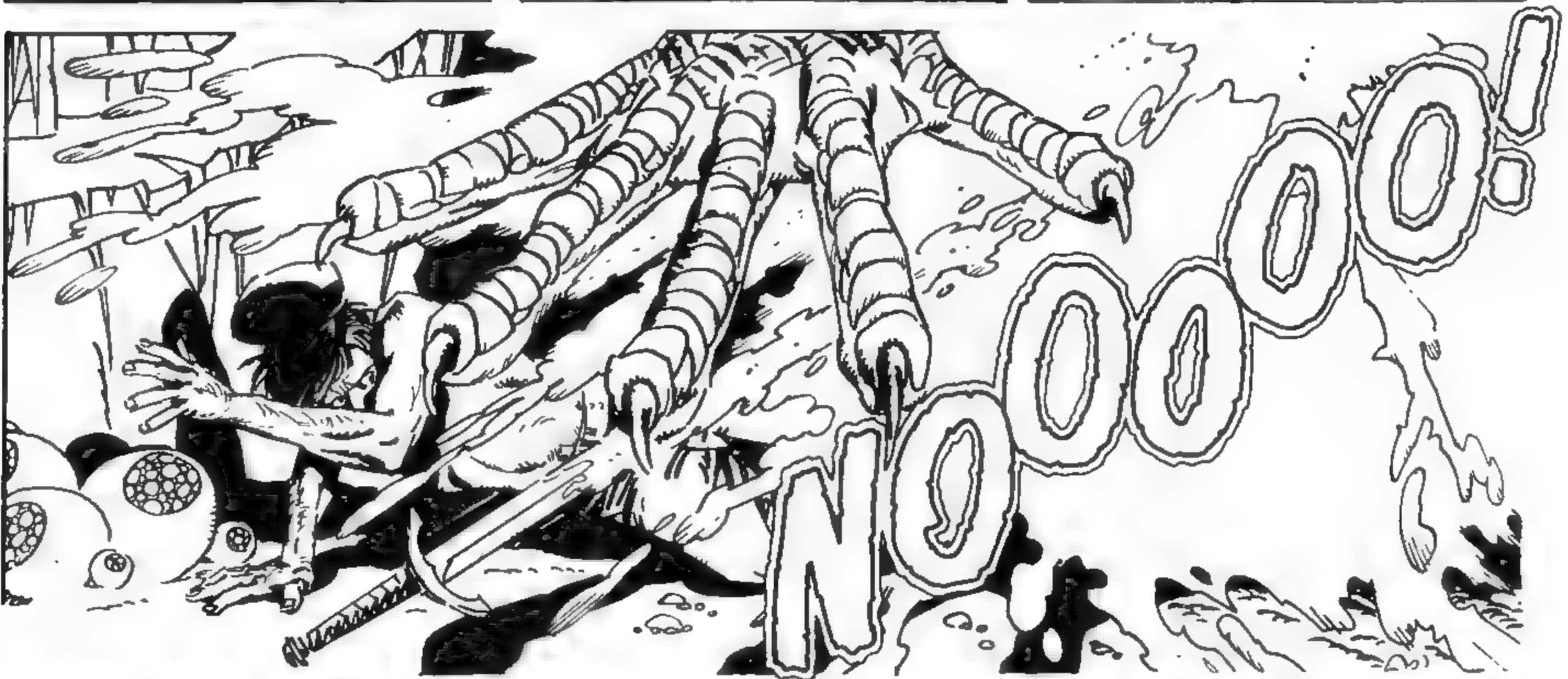
The strength of this sword and the sorcery in this jewel will harvest enough Troll skulls to build a snuggery-house sufficient to shelter all the sisters . . . from Baalzarra to liberated Alizarr!

Hold your blade high, warrior maid. Today is a day of victory. But a titanic task still looms ahead. You will be wooed by a handsome countryman and meet the Vicar of the Cavern God in the next exciting installment of Ghita of Alizarr!

HAXTUR







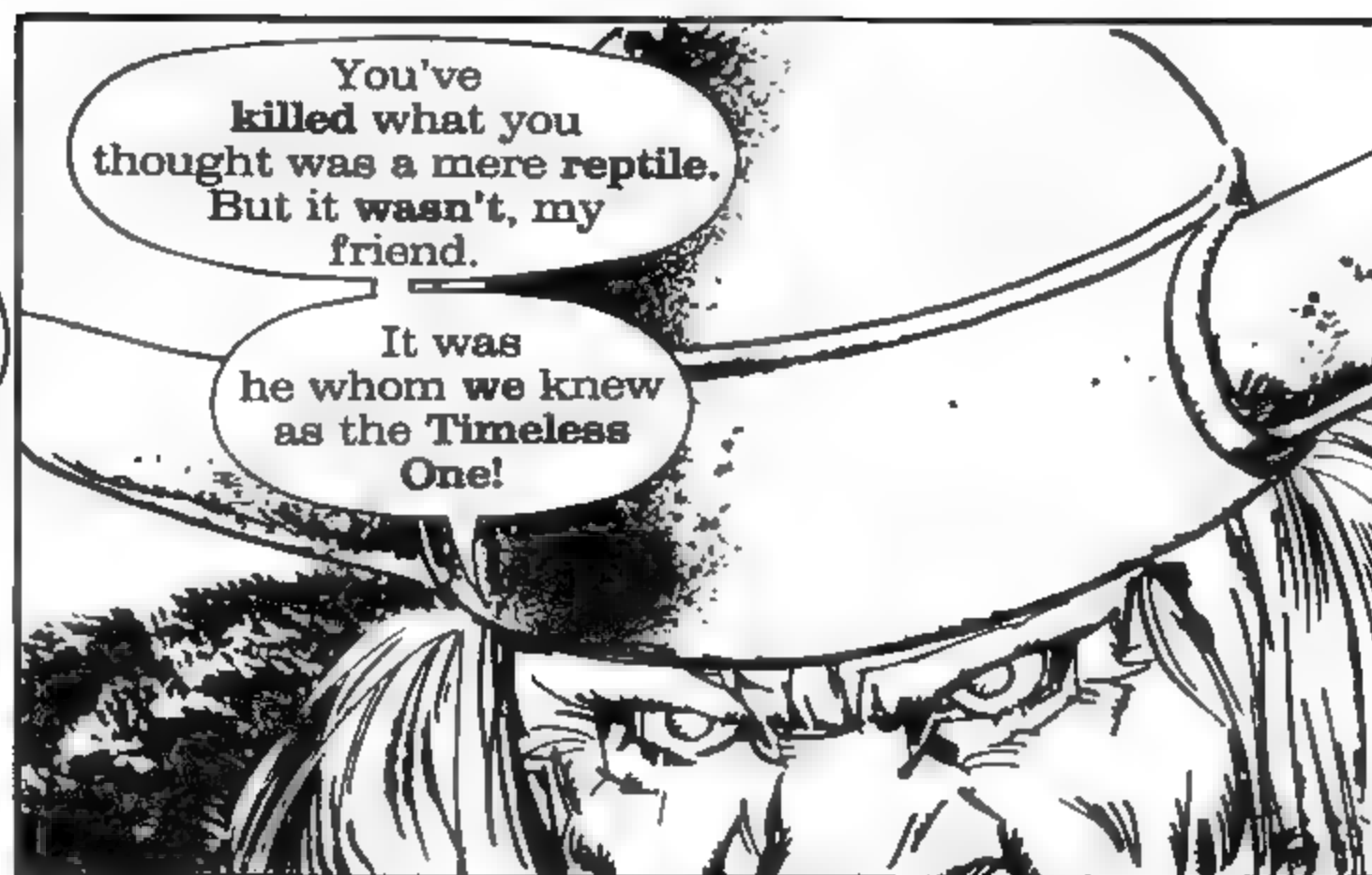




Mortal!?
And just what are you,
mister . . . Some kind of
god?

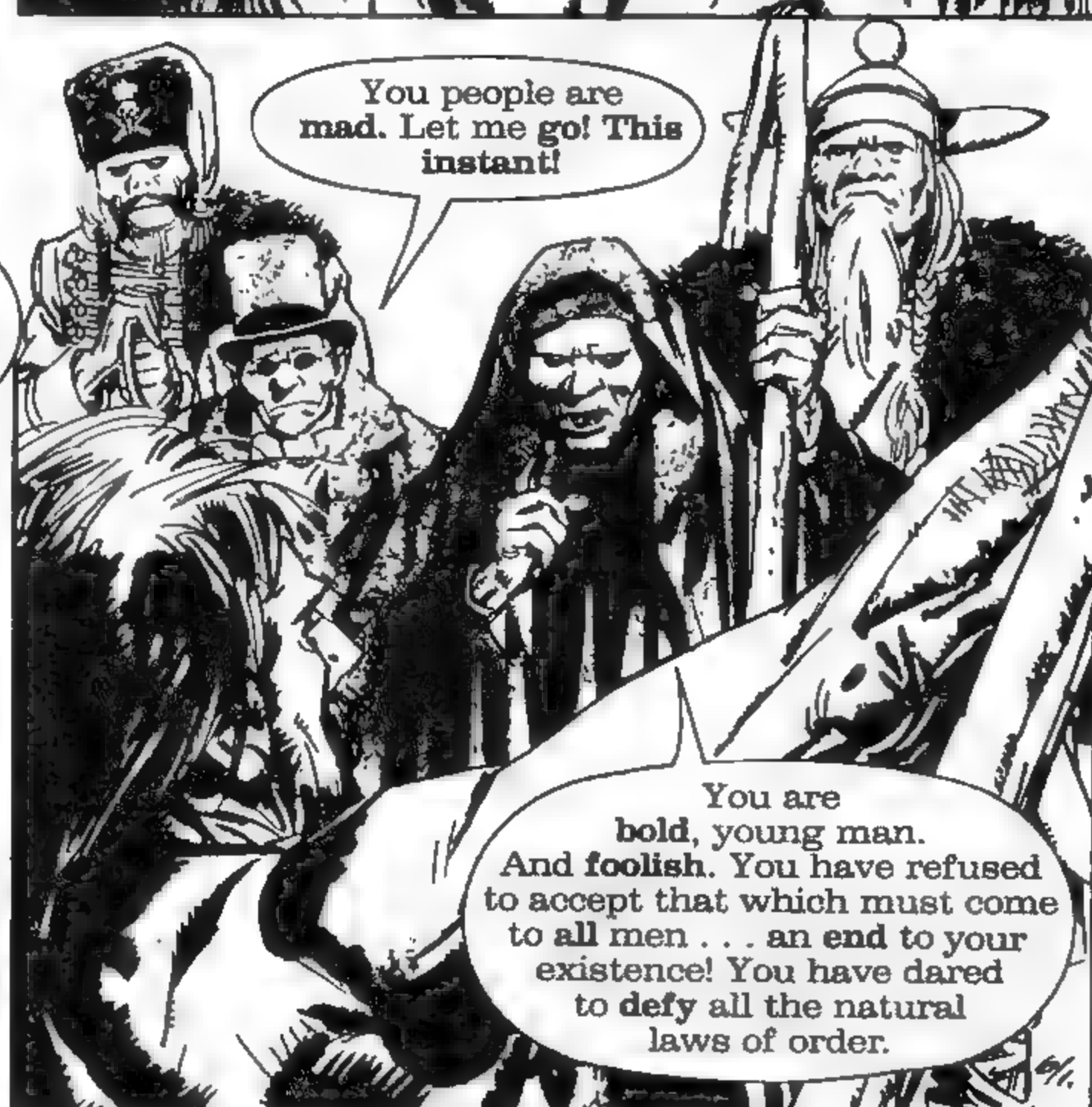
Is that
what you want
me to believe . . . that
this is a land of the
dead? Heaven!? Ha!

This is
a unique experience
for you! Abject pain is
the best way for you to
find your own answers to
those questions.



You've
killed what you
thought was a mere reptile.
But it wasn't, my
friend.

It was
he whom we knew
as the Timeless
One!



You people are
mad. Let me go! This
instant!

You are
bold, young man.
And foolish. You have refused
to accept that which must come
to all men . . . an end to your
existence! You have dared
to defy all the natural
laws of order.



For that,
we will not condemn
you. But since you believe
yourself to be an unusual
man . . . we will offer you an
unusual opportunity.

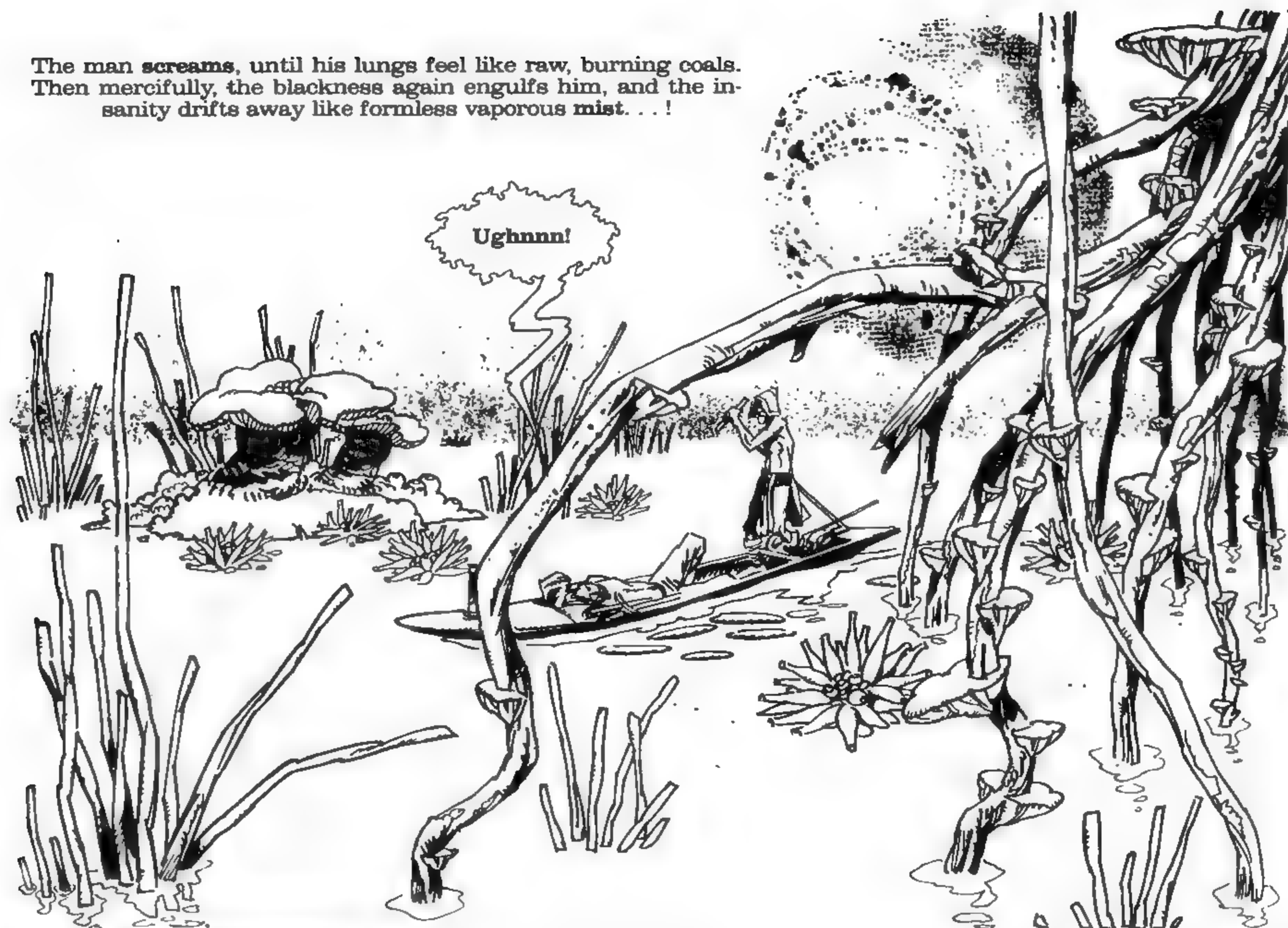
Your existence will not
end until you have discovered the
meaning of your being and that of
all your species.

It will be for you alone to
discover mankind's ultimate destiny,
his very purpose for being!

We, the
Keepers of Eternity,
condemn you to wander in the rime . . .
until you find the inevitable solution
to this timeless, insoluble
mystery!

The man screams, until his lungs feel like raw, burning coals. Then mercifully, the blackness again engulfs him, and the insanity drifts away like formless vaporous mist. . . !

Ughnnn!



W-who are you? What . . . what am I doing in this boat?

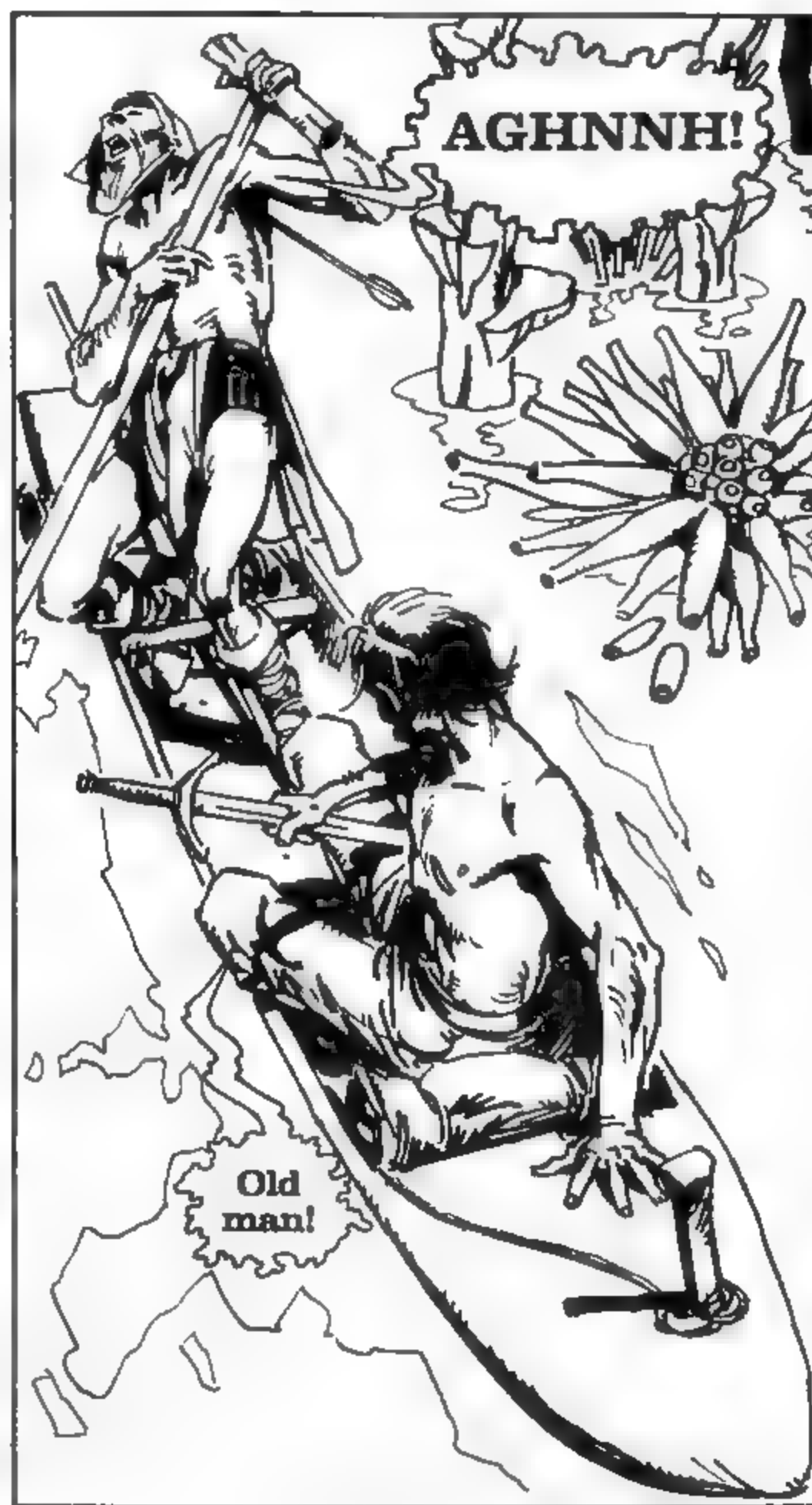
Easy, lad. I found you lying in the marshland. You were delirious . . . feverish . . . ! Easy prey for the lizard-faces!

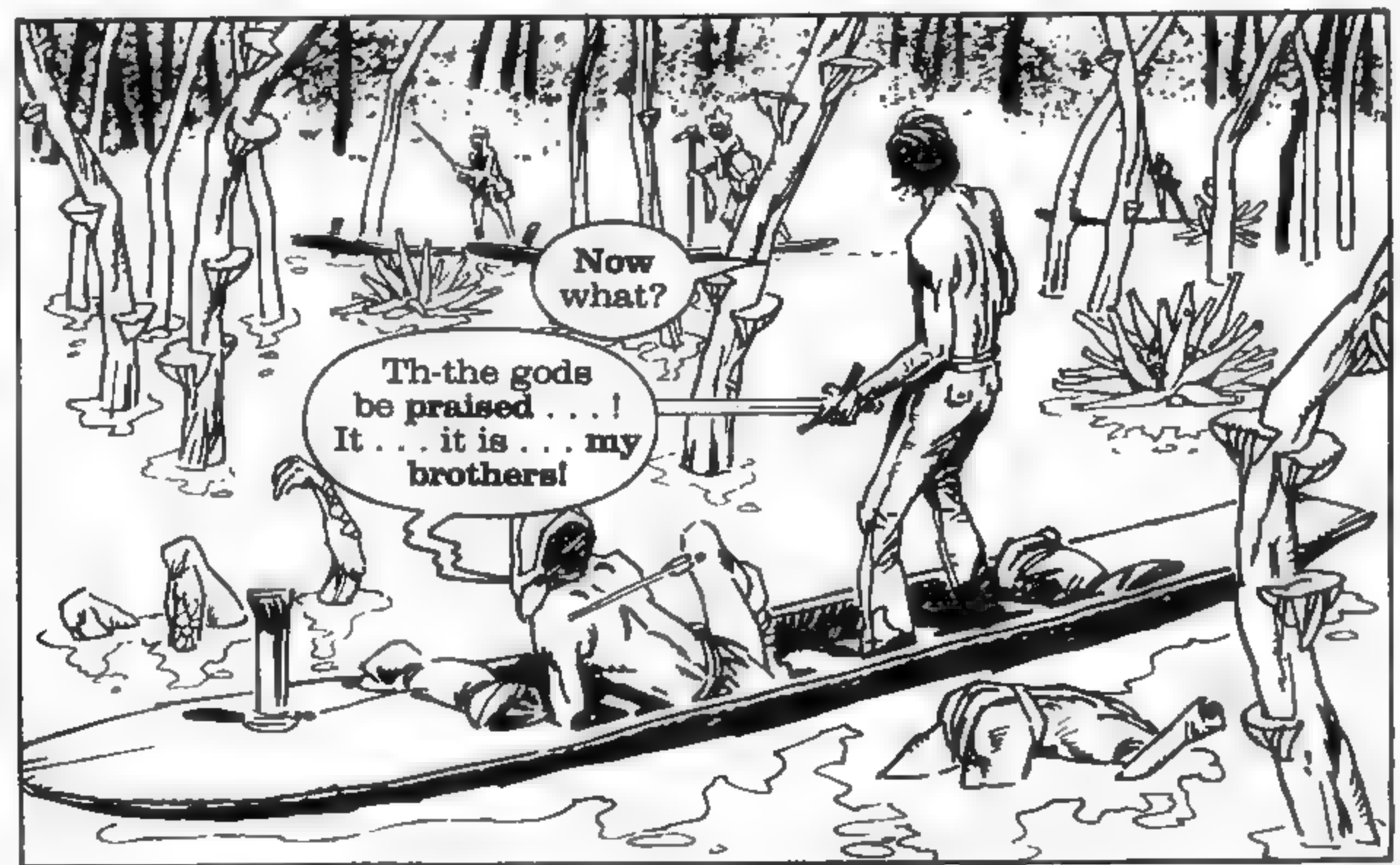
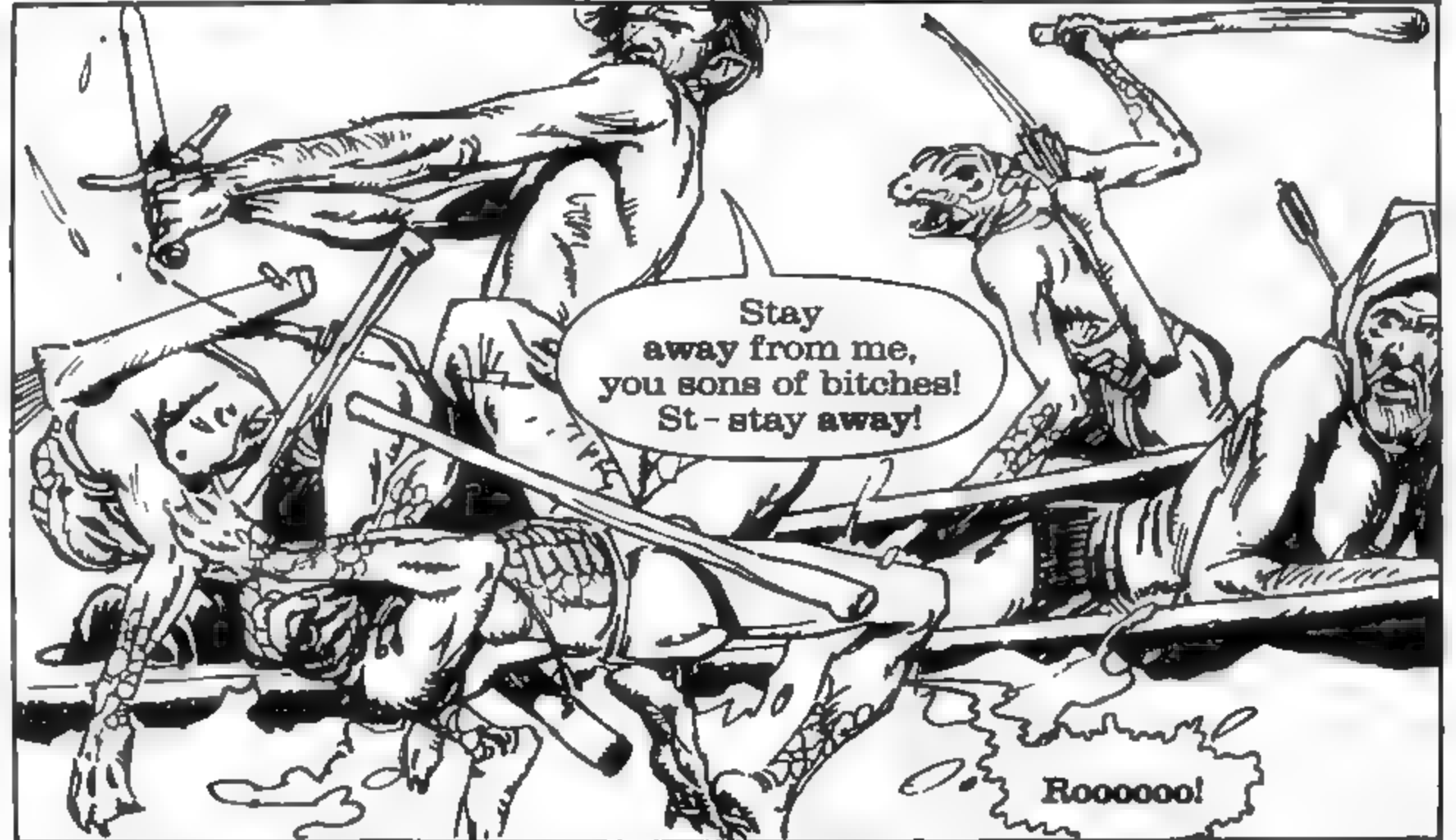
I must say you look better now, though. When we get to my place you can rest until—!

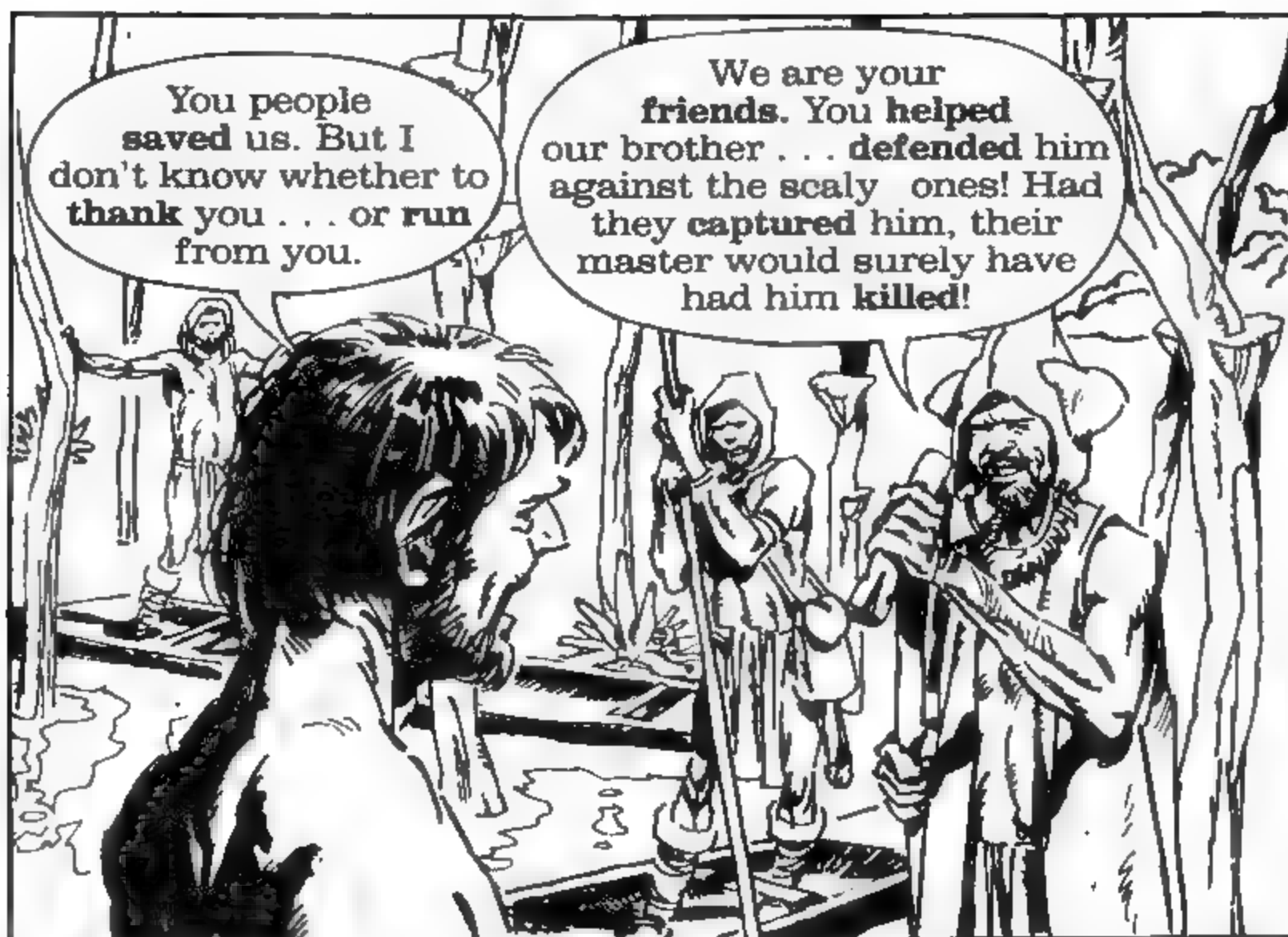


AGHNNH!

Old man!







You people saved us. But I don't know whether to thank you . . . or run from you.

We are your friends. You helped our brother . . . defended him against the scaly ones! Had they captured him, their master would surely have had him killed!

Truth be told, I was only defending myself. But I'll take your friendship. Seems like its been a long time since I've seen a smiling face!

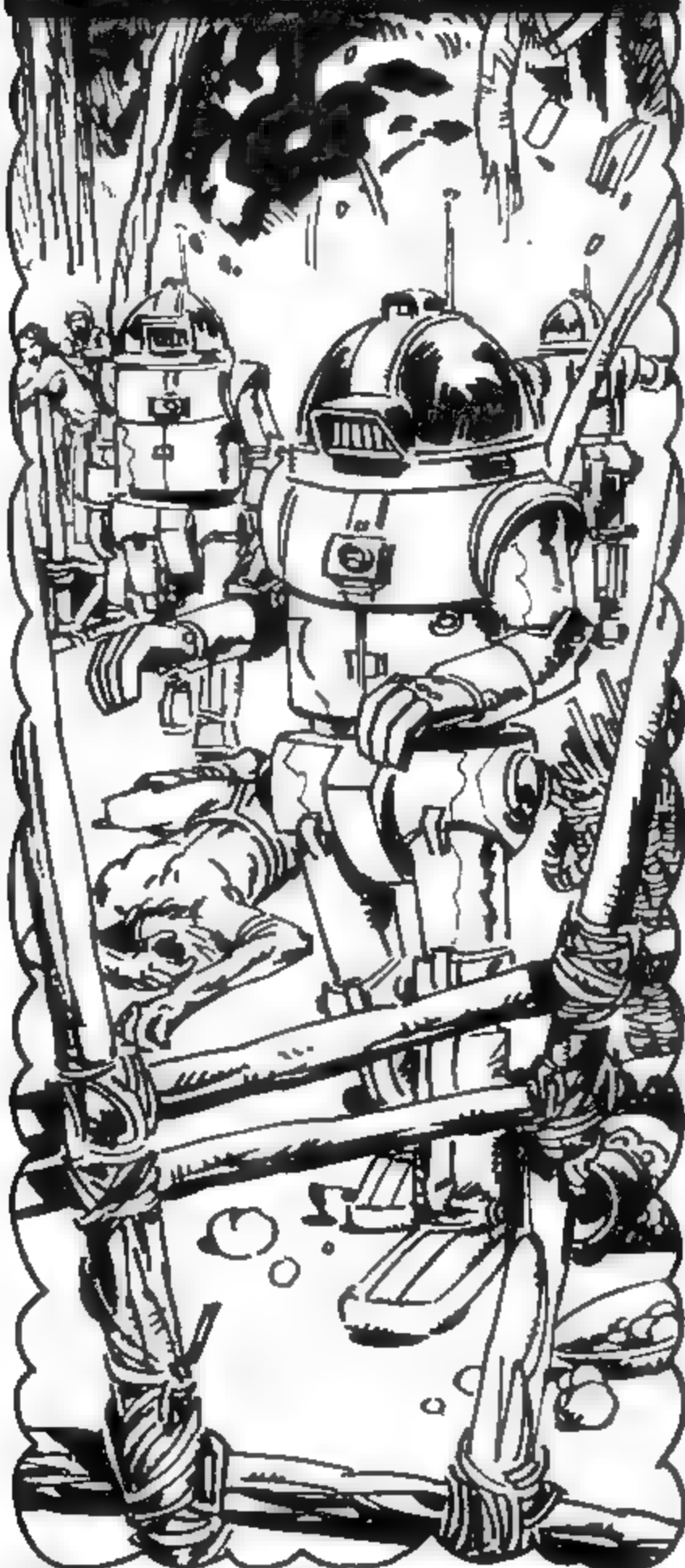
Can . . . can you tell me . . . ? What is this place? I . . . I can't seem to remember much, except . . . except some funny dream about being bound up by madmen!

Perhaps you are from the furtherland . . . as is the Tyrant!

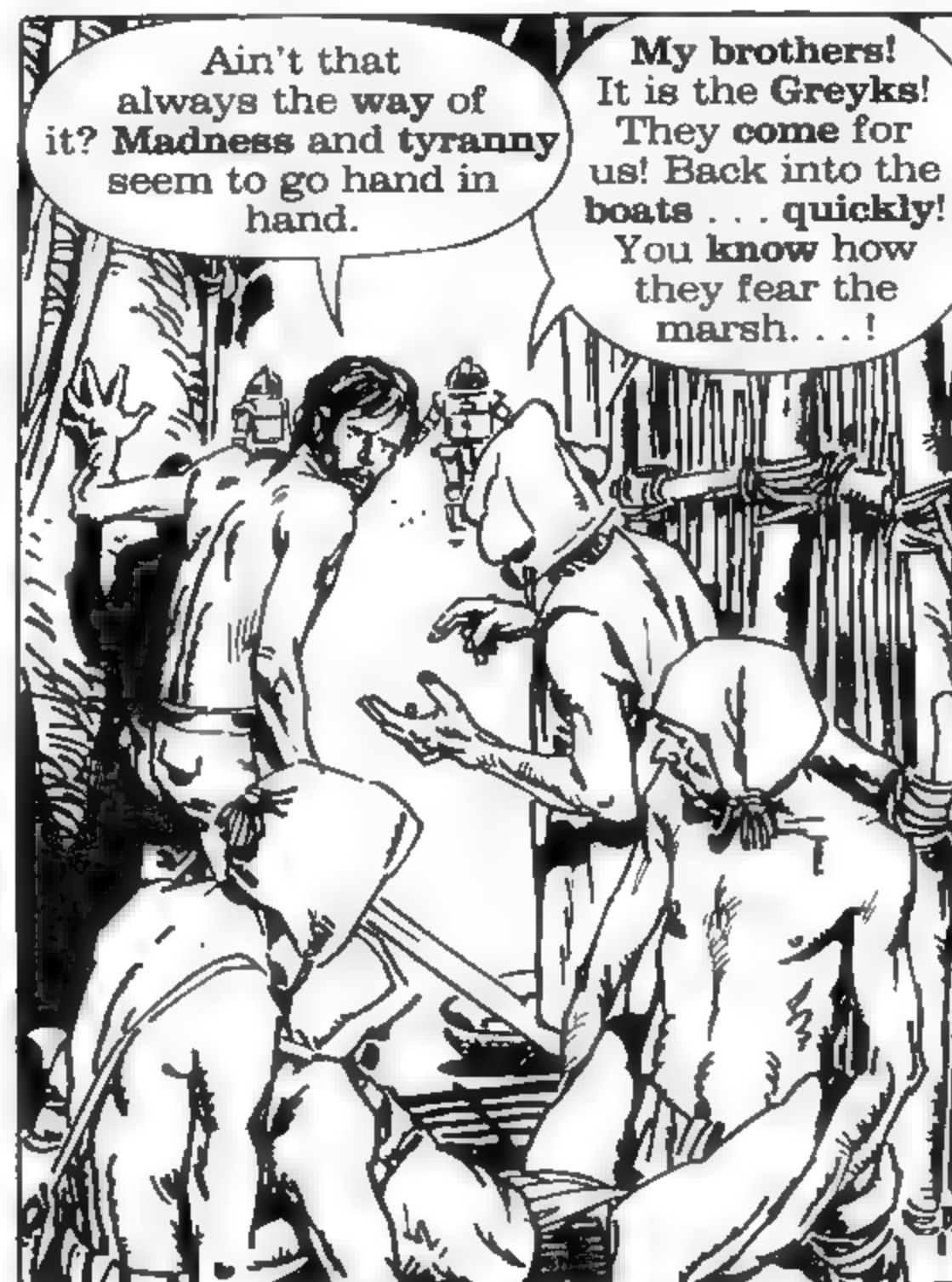
The Tyrant?

The tyrant, too, is a madman! He will stop at nothing to enslave all living things!

He came to the Silent Island some years ago, and created the Greyks, who now dominate the lizard-faces. He sends both the Greyks and the scaly ones among us, demanding obedience and tributes from our people. We would revolt, but his power is far greater than our own!

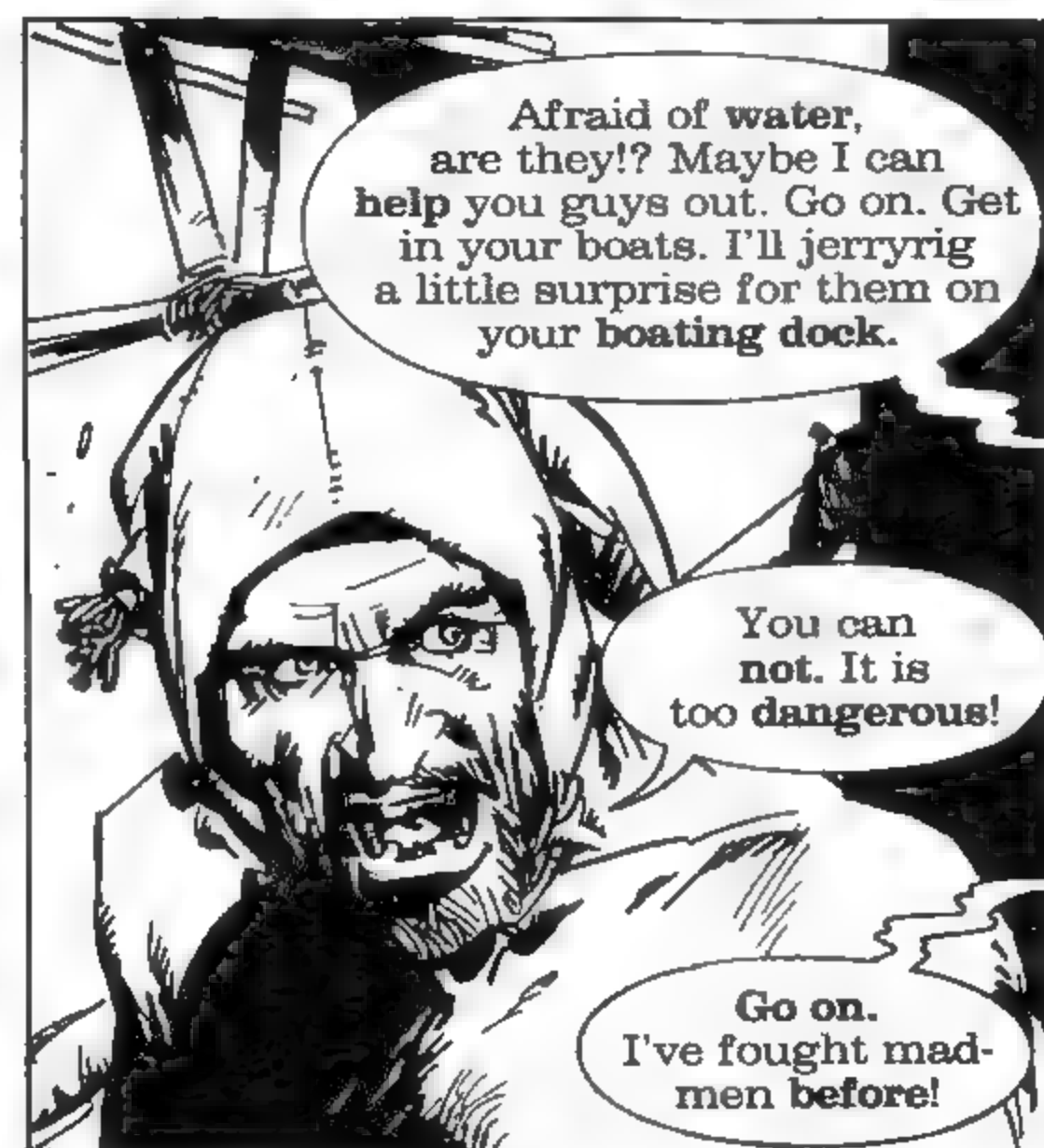


When I've finished manufacturing my metal army of Greyks, I'll establish the new order! I alone will be the acknowledged master of this planet of barbarians!



Ain't that always the way of it? Madness and tyranny seem to go hand in hand.

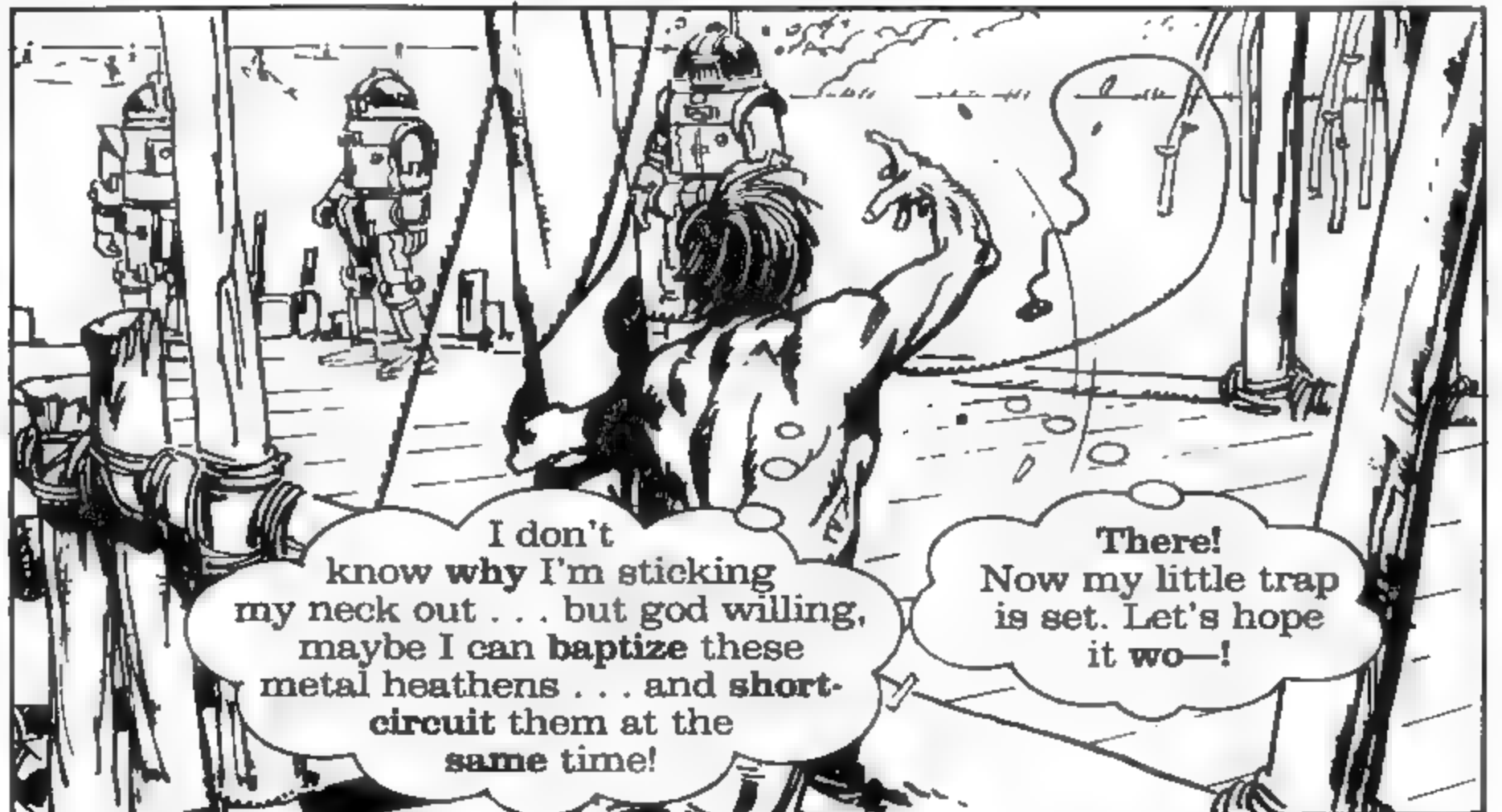
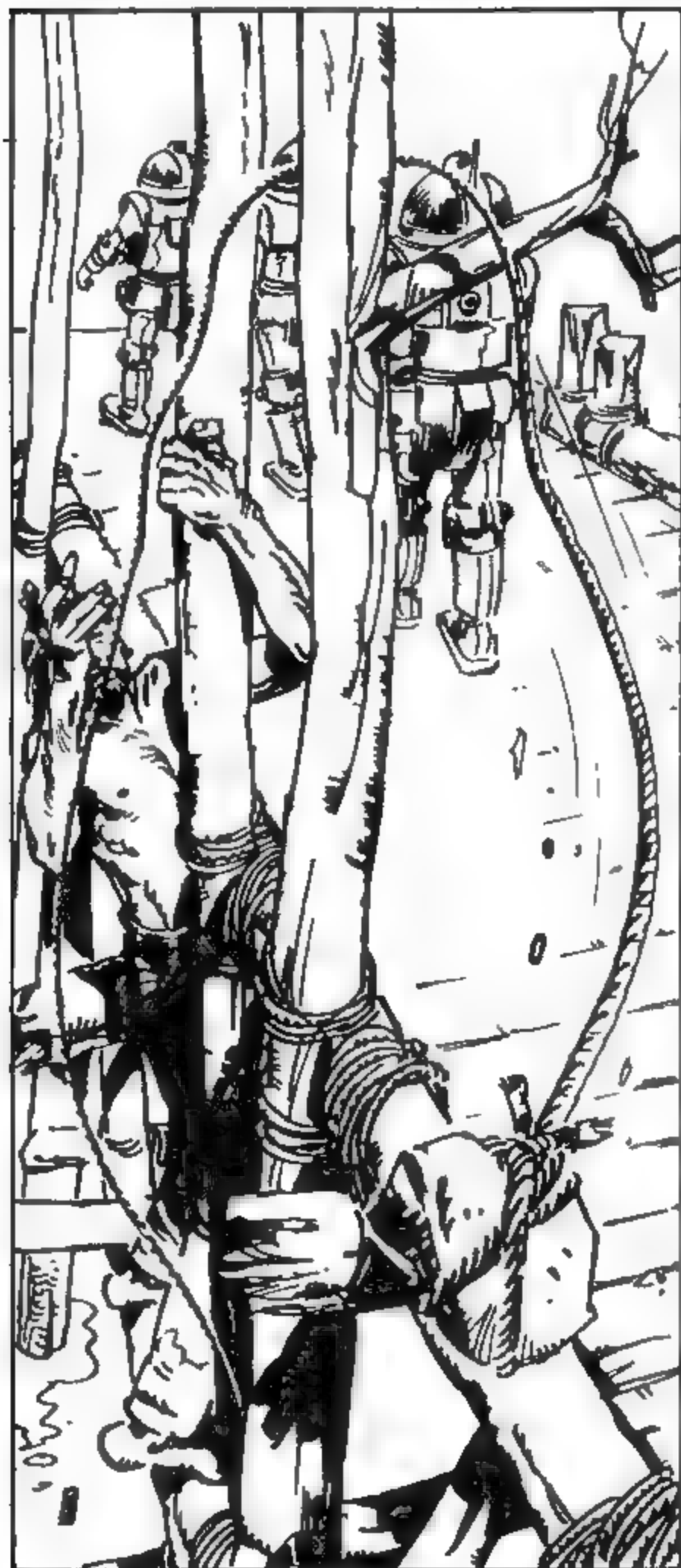
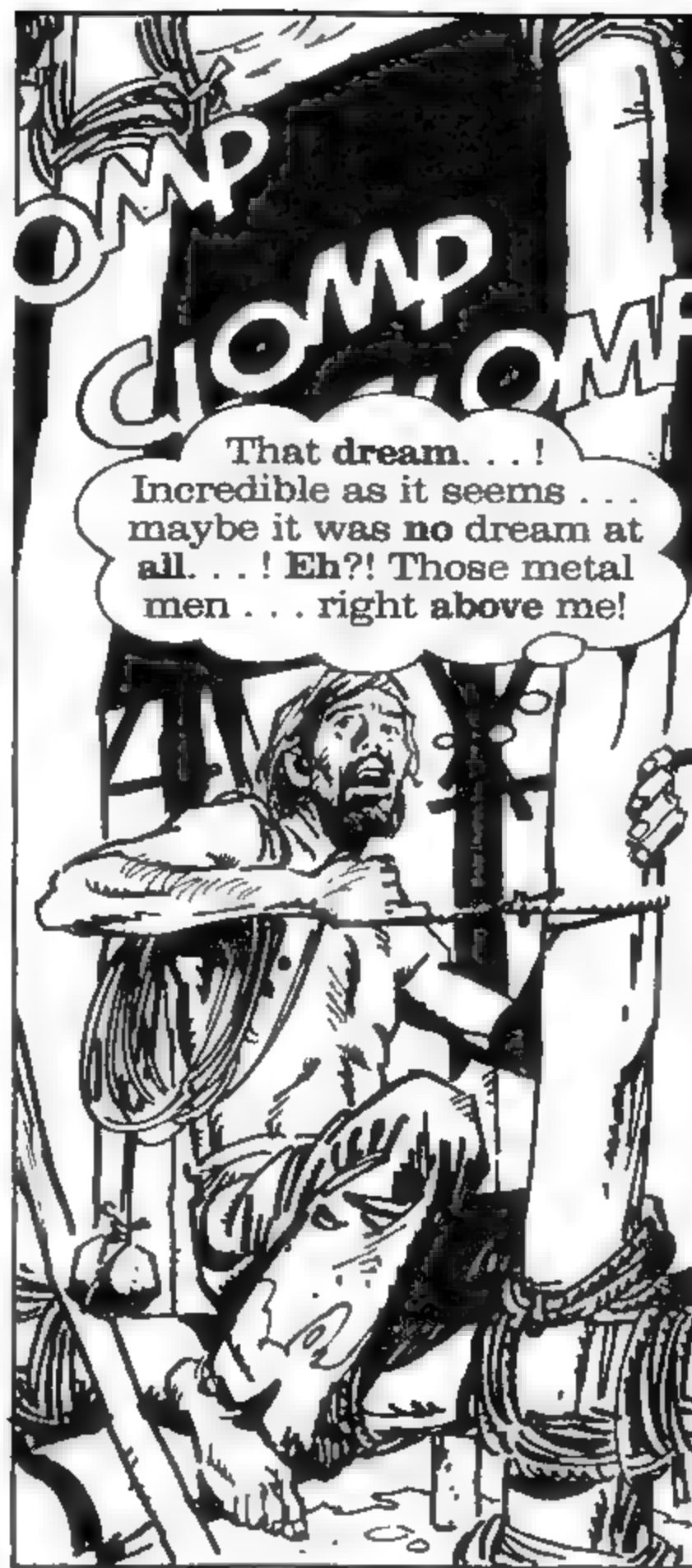
My brothers! It is the Greyks! They come for us! Back into the boats . . . quickly! You know how they fear the marsh . . . !



Afraid of water, are they!? Maybe I can help you guys out. Go on. Get in your boats. I'll jerryrig a little surprise for them on your boating dock.

You can not. It is too dangerous!

Go on. I've fought madmen before!





B-barely missed me! If I don't move quickly I may not be so lucky next time.

I pray this works!

C'mon, you grease-eating tin bugaboos! Come and get me!



NOW!!



I was right...! The water's shorting out their power source. Those tin goosestompers are as good as dead!

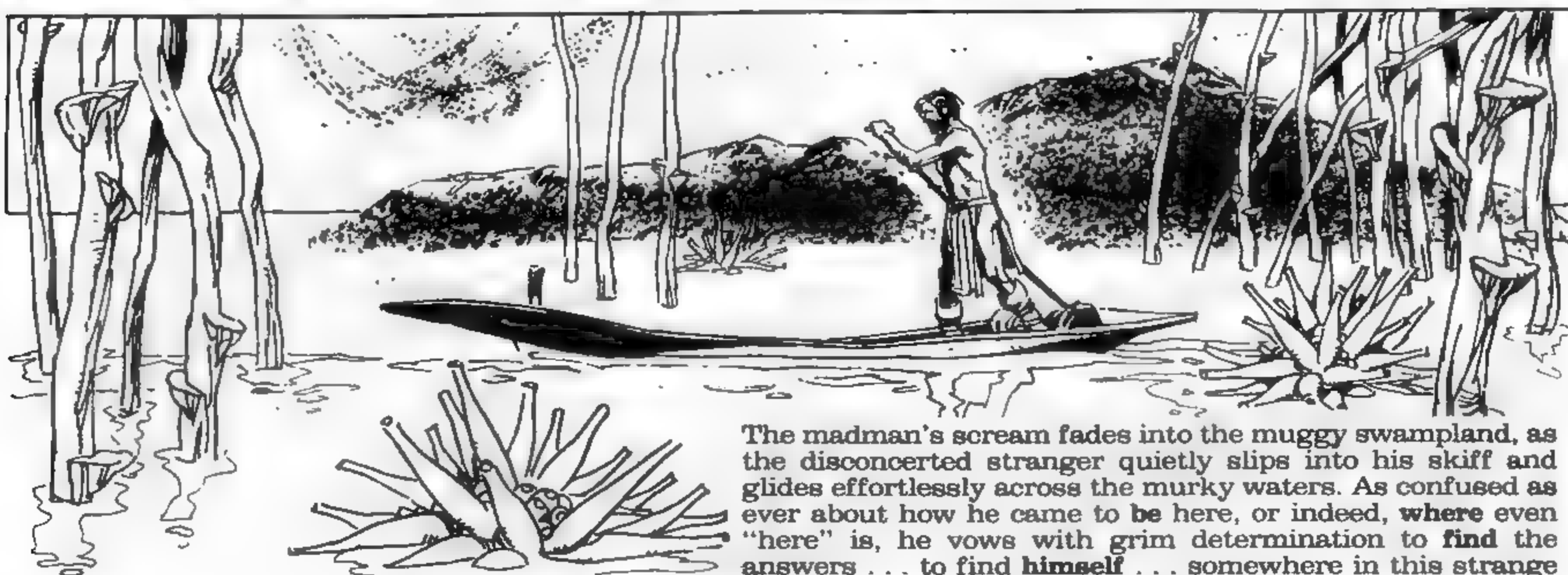


But the mad genius who conceived these utopian stormtroopers is still alive...!



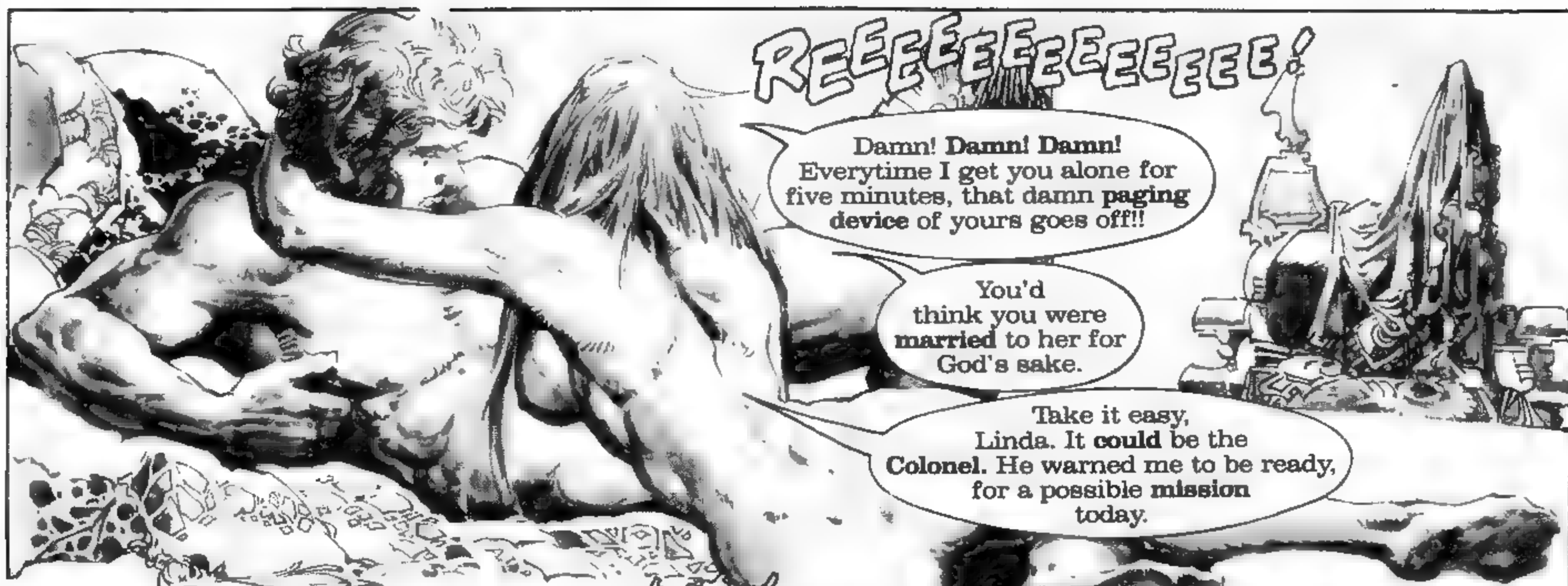
Your robots are buried in the marsh, madman! And your power has vanished with them...!

I pity you once the swamp people find out. But then maybe you won't even be alive when they do. I passed a party of lizard men on the way in here. And I hear tell they don't cotton to you much, either!



The madman's scream fades into the muggy swampland, as the disconcerted stranger quietly slips into his skiff and glides effortlessly across the murky waters. As confused as ever about how he came to be here, or indeed, where even "here" is, he vows with grim determination to find the answers... to find himself... somewhere in this strange new world before him...!

Haxtur continues in the next exciting issue of 1984.



REEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

Damn! Damn! Damn!
Everytime I get you alone for
five minutes, that damn paging
device of yours goes off!!

You'd
think you were
married to her for
God's sake.

Take it easy,
Linda. It could be the
Colonel. He warned me to be ready,
for a possible mission
today.



It's Cyndie!
I know it's her, damn
it! Can't she ever leave
you alone?

How
you doin',
handsome?

Oh, it
is you Cyndie.
I told you never
to call me
here.

Sorry to
bust in on your
affairs... but if you're
with Linda I'm sure I
haven't interrupted any-
thing important.

The
Colonel wants
to speak with you.
Priority Theta. See
you soon, lover.
Over and out.

That
bitch!

I'm going
back to bed, Kurt!
Why don't you ignore that
little tramp and come with
me. She doesn't do for you
the way I can.

So true,
sweetcakes. But we
do work well together.
Anyway, you know I
can't ignore a
Theta code.

I'll try
not to be too
long baby. Keep
your heart and
bed warm
for me.

Central
Defense Command and
don't spare the
nuke juice.

Righto,
buddy!



Thar she
blows, mister. Best
damn defense base this
burg's ever had!

Hah!
You don't have
to tell me! I
work there!

The space
jockey
alights from
the hovercab,
surprised at
the visage
before
him.

Cyndie,
love! I didn't
expect to find
you waiting for
me. I thought
you'd be in the
hangar.

Cyndie...
please
understand—!

The Colonel
is in the briefing
room. He's waiting
for you.

Don't "love"
me, you flaky cookie!
You told me on the recon
yesterday that you were
through with Linda. I
should have known
better than to
believe you!

Cyndie was a rocket fighter . . . as complex and sophisticated as she was sleek and trim. Her nuclear powered "Cooper" engine was capable of combining, after only minor adjustments, the atmosphere of forty-seven planets with her jet fuel; converting it into enough energy to fly her at speeds of up to **mach six** or three times the speed of a high-powered bullet!

She was controlled by the **thought impulses** (as delicate as tau waves) of her pilot, which made an **amiable rapport** between her and her human commander a matter of life and death.

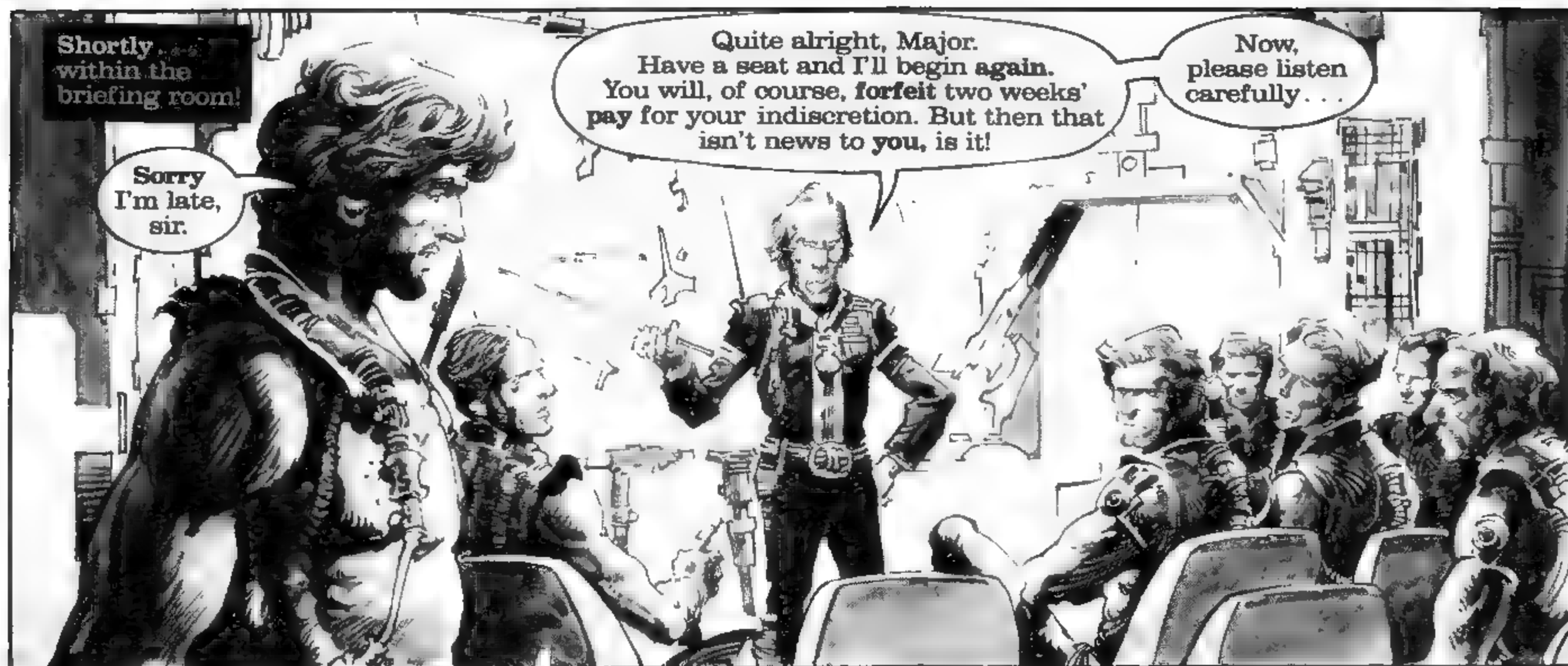
What can I say?
Linda and I made up. Face it, Cyndie. I love you, but **Linda** gives me what you can't. If you were **flesh and blood**—! Oh, but why even bother thinking such a thing . . . !

I'd better race to the briefing before "**Mad Dog**" Huntz fixes me so I'm as **sexless** as you. See you later, love.

Sexless!?
I've been programmed to react as a **female**, you rat! **Female!**

Don't forget . . . ! Up here you don't belong to Linda. You're all **mine**, lover. You think only of me!

THINKING
OF YOU!



Shortly within the briefing room!

Sorry I'm late, sir.

Quite alright, Major. Have a seat and I'll begin again. You will, of course, forfeit two weeks' pay for your indiscretion. But then that isn't news to you, is it!

Now, please listen carefully...



While at the site of the ancient city of Saradyl some fifty-eight kilometers away...

... Negotiations at Cryslor have broken down, my brothers! We have politely asked the humans to leave... and they have flatly refused. Our only recourse is to bomb their settlement.

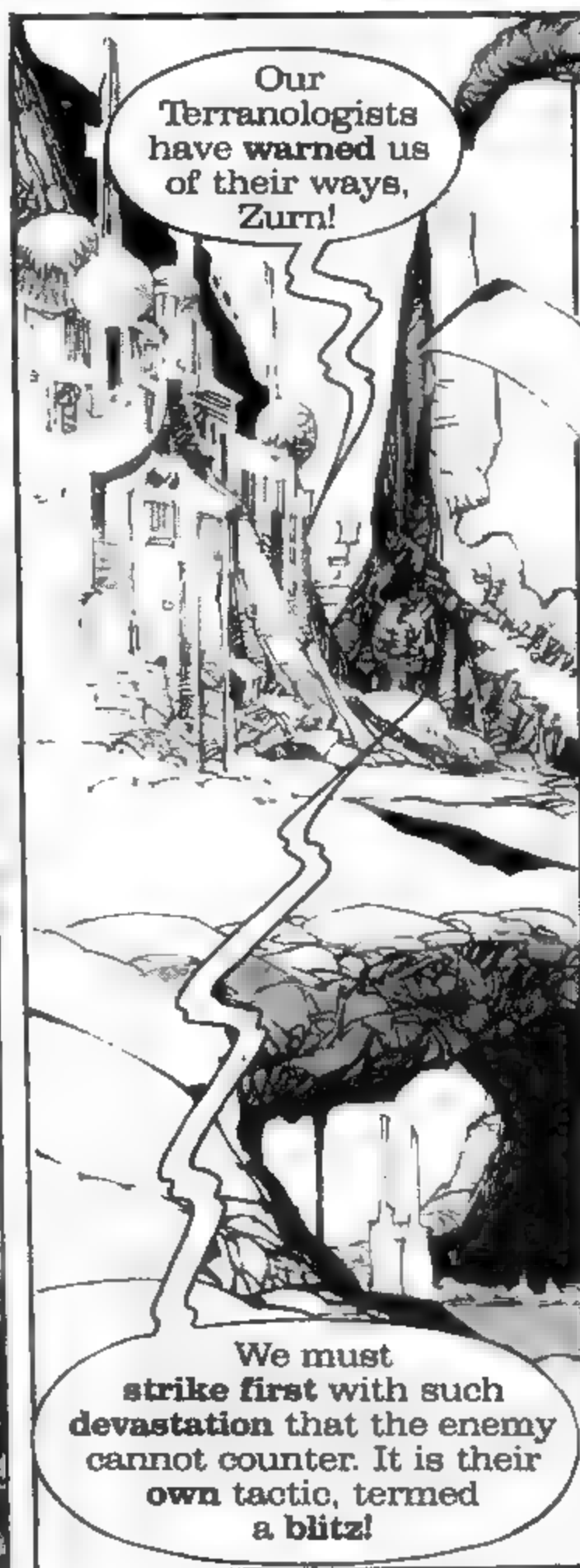
But, Colonel Barzoz...! We will be attacking them with weapons they gave us. We are turning their own gifts against them! Surely you see how unjust this is.



Terrans are generous only when it benefits them, brother Zurn!

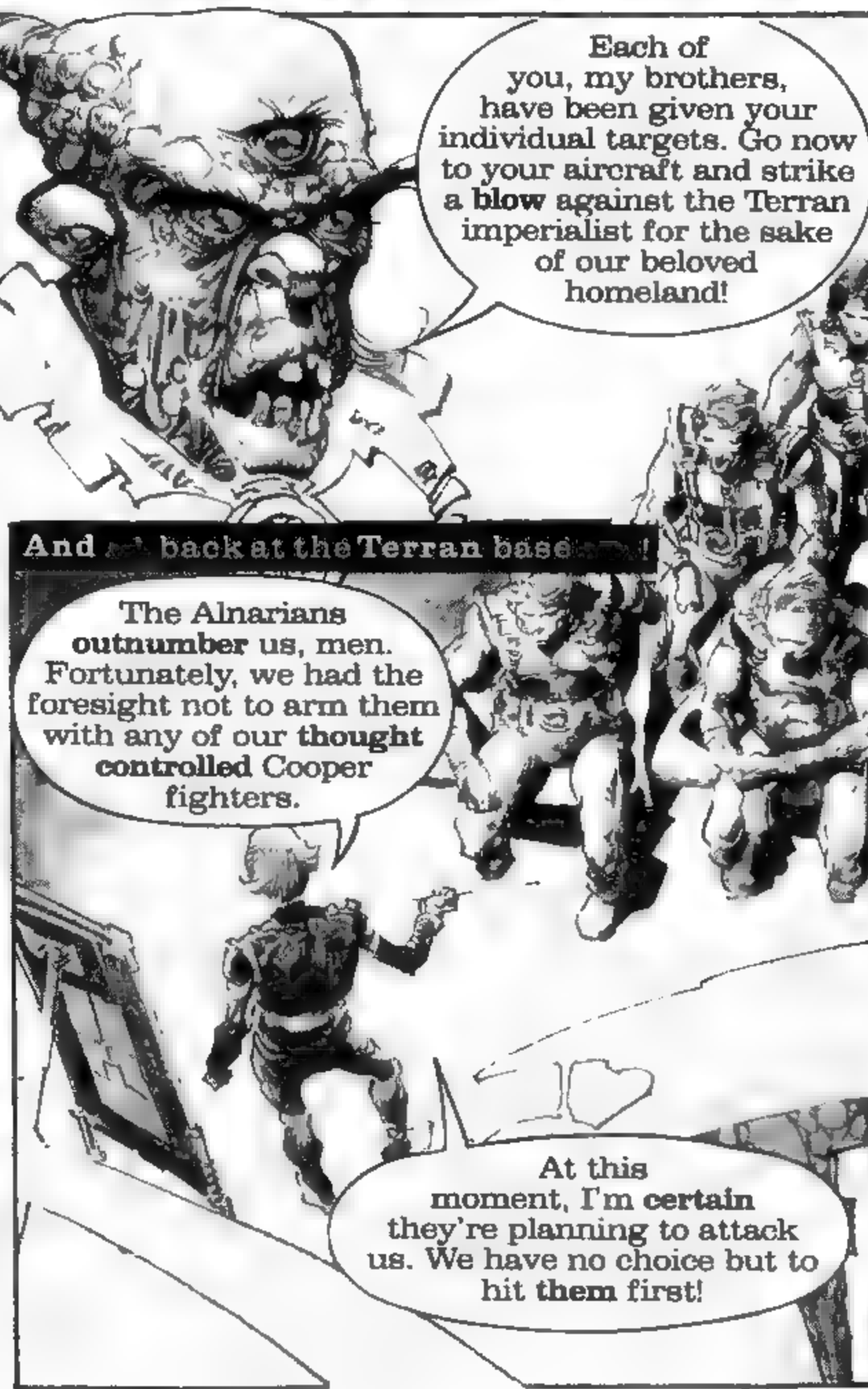
They gave us technology in order to drain our planet of its natural resources. They have a reputation for such heinous practices!

But to attack them without warning—!



Our Terranologists have warned us of their ways, Zurn!

We must strike first with such devastation that the enemy cannot counter. It is their own tactic, termed a blitz!



And back at the Terran base...

The Alnarians outnumber us, men. Fortunately, we had the foresight not to arm them with any of our thought controlled Cooper fighters.

At this moment, I'm certain they're planning to attack us. We have no choice but to hit them first!



If we wipe out their air force, we can reopen negotiations with power favorably on our side.

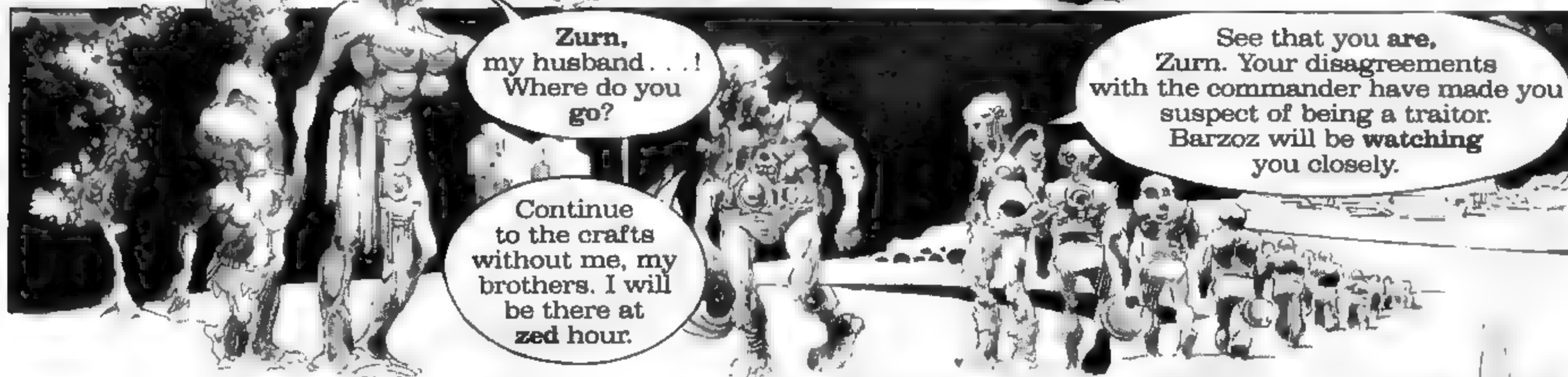
Ahem...! Don't you agree, Major Connell?

Uh... um... I mean yes, sir! Er... that is no, sir!

I... I'm sorry, sir. I guess I was thinking about something else.

Get to your planes, men! And another week's pay from the dreamer.

I hope she was worth it, Major.



Zurn, my husband...! Where do you go?

Continue to the crafts without me, my brothers. I will be there at zed hour.

See that you are, Zurn. Your disagreements with the commander have made you suspect of being a traitor. Barzoz will be watching you closely.



This is the mission, is it not, my love? The suicide mission you dreamed of for the past three nights.

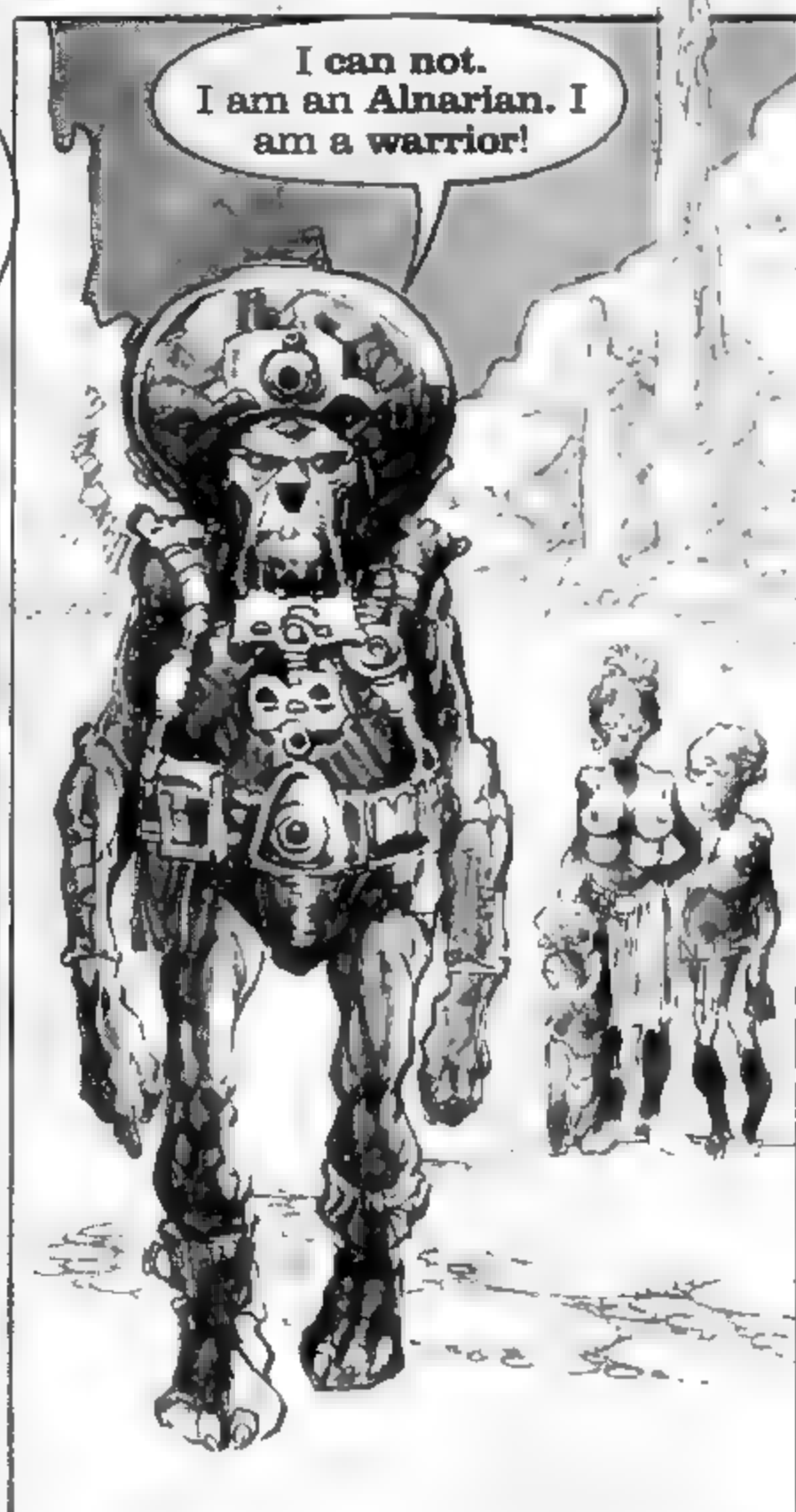
I am a warrior, Dera. I have no fear of death. But for the sake of you and the children, I dread this day.



If we are crushed, the egomaniacal humans will patronize. They will bind our wounds like kindly fathers. They will forgive us our trespasses.

And if we win, they will send down their rocket fortresses to annihilate us!

Then the answer is simple. You must lose the battle, my husband.



I can not. I am an Alnarian. I am a warrior!

Meanwhile, at the Terran base, the Earthmen, too, encounter minor difficulties of their own.

What's the trouble, Cyndie old girl? You're getting off to a mighty slow start. Aren't my mental vibes hot enough for you today?

Loose connection in one of the interface circuits, is all, lover. It's corrected now, though. All systems are go for this little altercation of ours.

Then why aren't we lifting off, with the rest of the squadron?

You didn't stroke my panel for luck the way you always do, lover. I'm beginning to feel neglected.

Okay, sweets. For luck.

I just love the way you do that, Kurt.

Glad you and Cyndie could join us, Kurt. For a while, we suspected that the two of you might want to be left alone.

Cut the clowning, Bean. You know Cyndie and I are just friends.

Hey! I'm picking up something on the microdar. A flock of Garabats I think.

No. Too fast for—! Good Lord, Cyndie! Is that what I think it is?

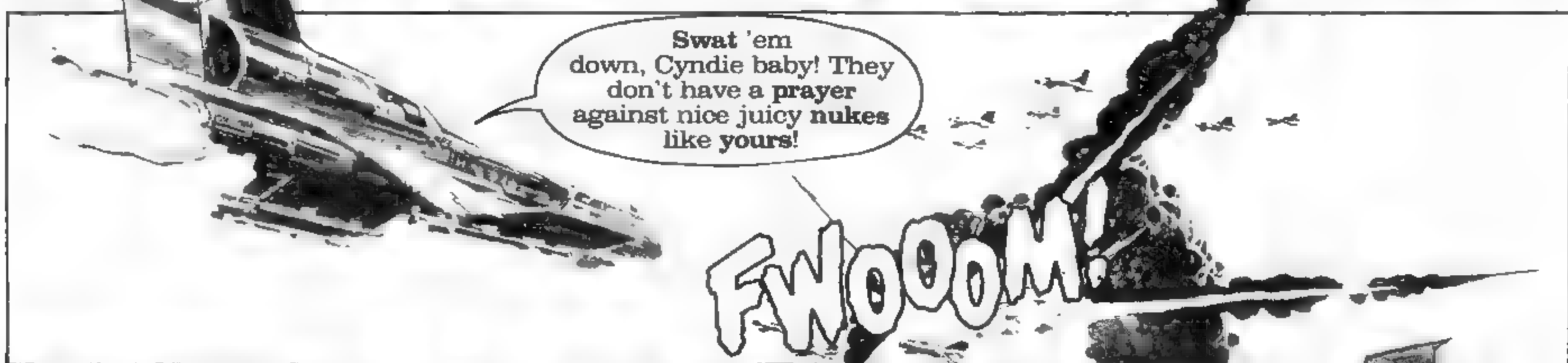
I'm afraid so, dumpling. Those blips are a squadron of Alnarians!

Squadron my ass! That's the whole damned Alnarian Air Force.



No chance for support from the rocket carriers, Kurt. They're attempting to squelch a rebellion on Ekliptiklopi IV. We're on our own!

Okay, Bean. Divide them into quadrants and we'll each handle a sector. I'll take the lower right... quad D.



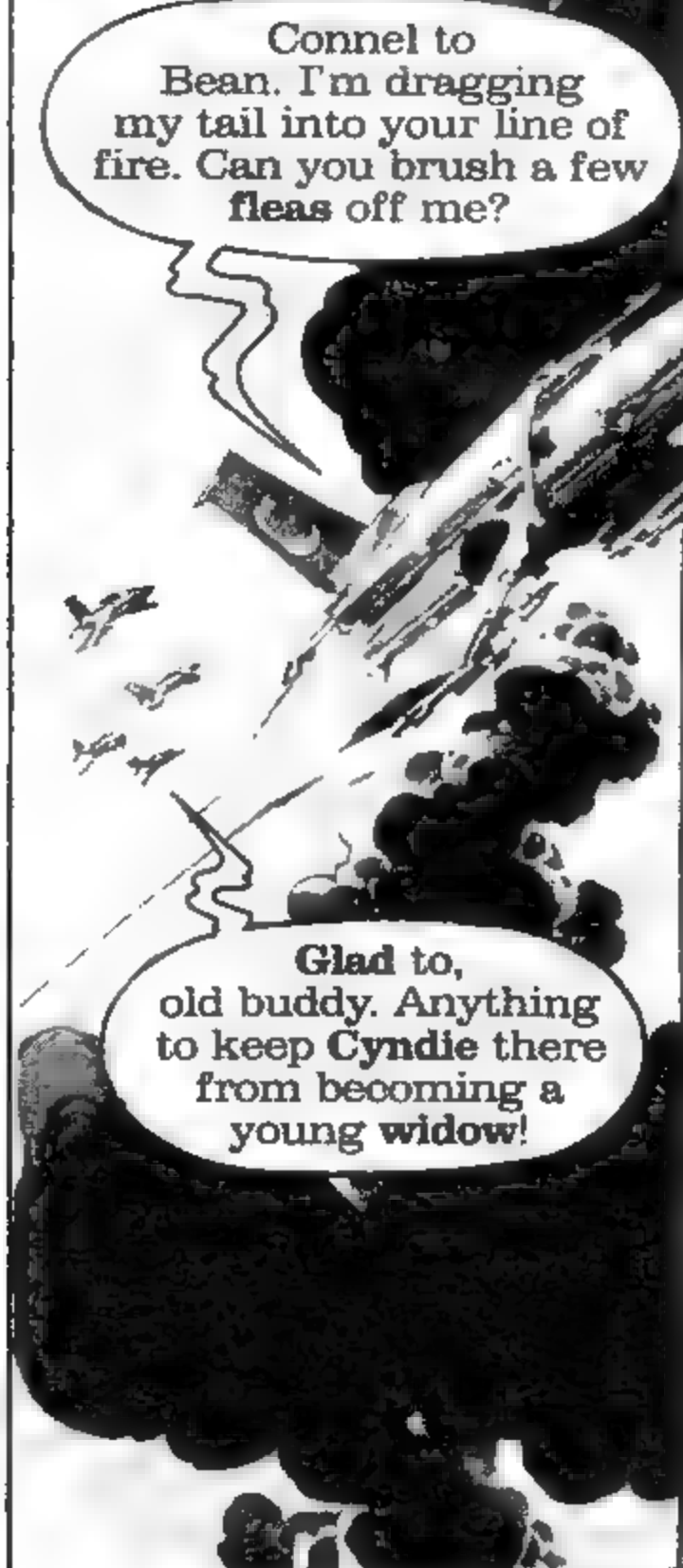
Swat 'em down, Cyndie baby! They don't have a prayer against nice juicy nukes like yours!

FWOOOM!

Cyndie's payload consisted of four Ferret missiles loaded two under each wing, six Devamite bombs under her belly, two 800-gallon drop tanks, and for straight dog-fighting, her combat weapon was a 20 x 2.55 inch laser cannon.

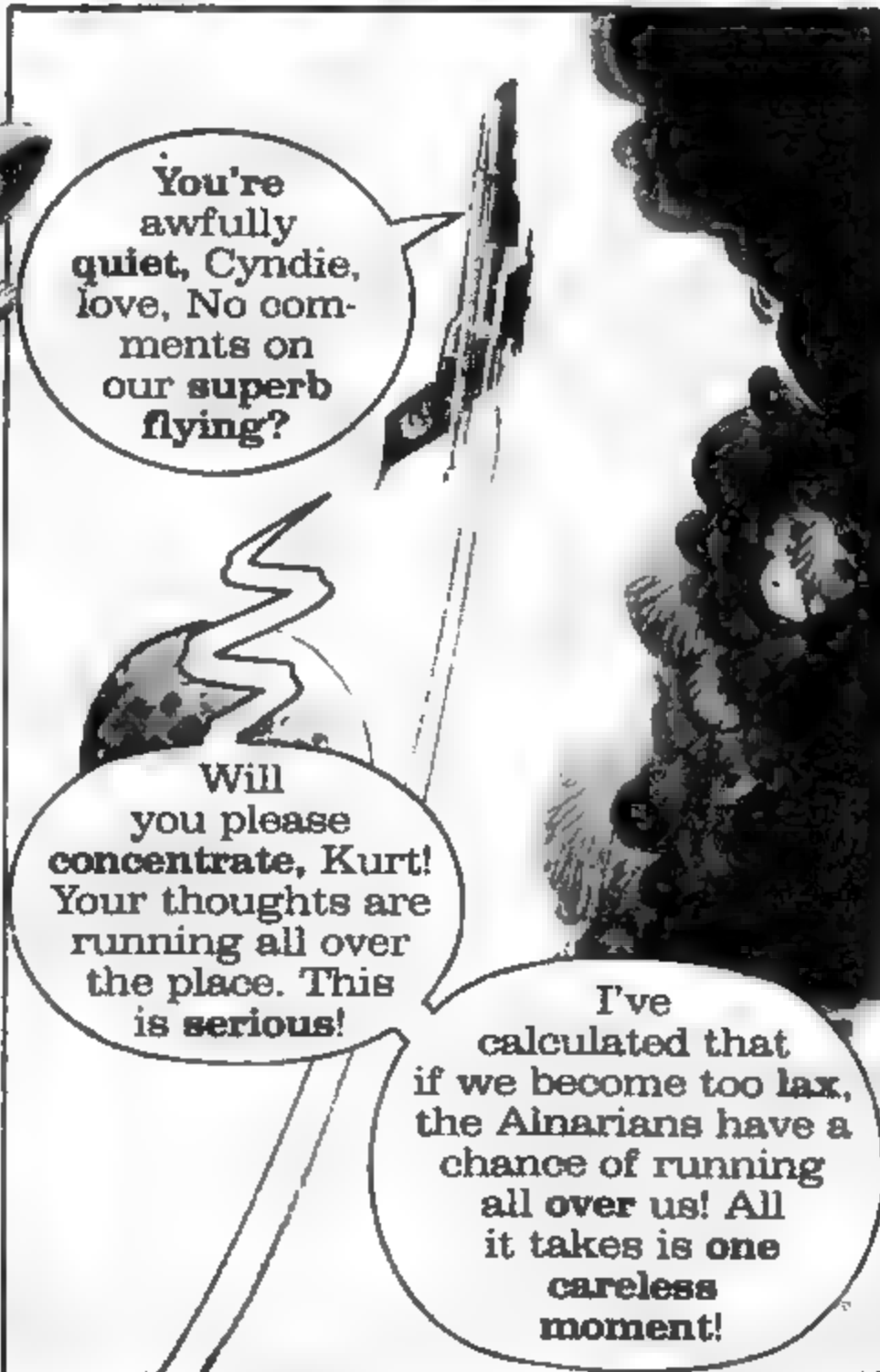


Thank ya much, m'man! Don't know what I'd do without you!



Connel to Bean. I'm dragging my tail into your line of fire. Can you brush a few fleas off me?

Glad to, old buddy. Anything to keep Cyndie there from becoming a young widow!



You're awfully quiet, Cyndie, love. No comments on our superb flying?

Will you please concentrate, Kurt! Your thoughts are running all over the place. This is serious!

I've calculated that if we become too lax, the Alnarians have a chance of running all over us! All it takes is one careless moment!



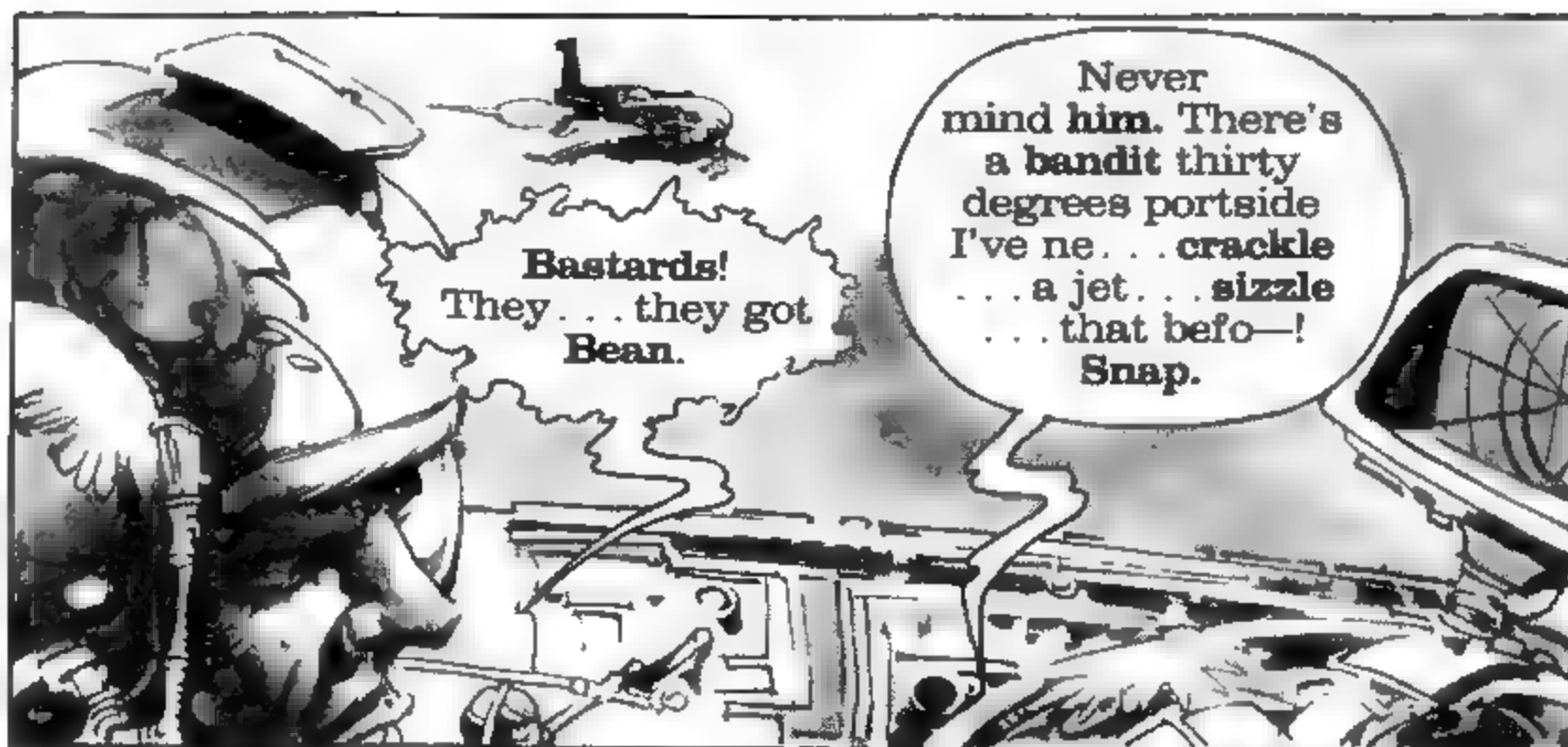
Kurt, this is Bean! Now I've got a tail... and they're closin' in fast!

I'll try to pull them into your line of fire. Can you—? Oh God!

They... they're going after my...



... tanks!



Bastards!
They... they got
Bean.

Never
mind him. There's
a bandit thirty
degrees portside
I've ne... crackle
... a jet... sizzle
... that befo—!
Snap.



Pull away,
Cyndie! That's a jammer!
It's sending our inter-
ference signals. They're
trying to break contact
between us.

Cyndie!!
Can you hear me?
Pull away!
You...

crackle... can't stand
for us... sizzle... be
apart, can you?



Cyndie obeyed without
hesitation. But the rest
of Kurt's squadron
wasn't as fortunate.
The pilots, cut off from
their crafts, were
almost totally helpless.



Though the main force of the
blast missed Cyndie, pieces of
the exploding Terran jet ripped
through the canopy... and
several pin sized frags lodged
themselves in Kurt's head!
Luckily, none were able to
penetrate his skull.



I... I'm going
after the jammer, Cyn!
Can... Can you keep them off me with
the laser while I pump a rocket
into the beast?

Sure thing,
lover. But be careful.
There aren't many Terrans
left! The Alnarians will
all be concentrating
on us!

THAKOW!



The Terran is heading for the jammer. If he destroys it, we have not a chance of victory!

But if I stop him, we will win... and have to face the rage of the Terran Galactic forces.

My people would never survive such a terrible blitz.



What I do, I do for you, my wife and my children. I pray you will understand.

I am not a traitor. I am yet a warrior!



I... I'm ready, Cyndie. N-not thinking too... too clearly because of my head wound...! But... can visualize the jammer... see it...!

Put a hold on the rocket, lover. I don't know why, but an Alnarian jet is on a collision course with the target. He's going to hit it...



... Now!

BOOM!



D-dizzy... on t-target...! But... but what is target... c-can't—!

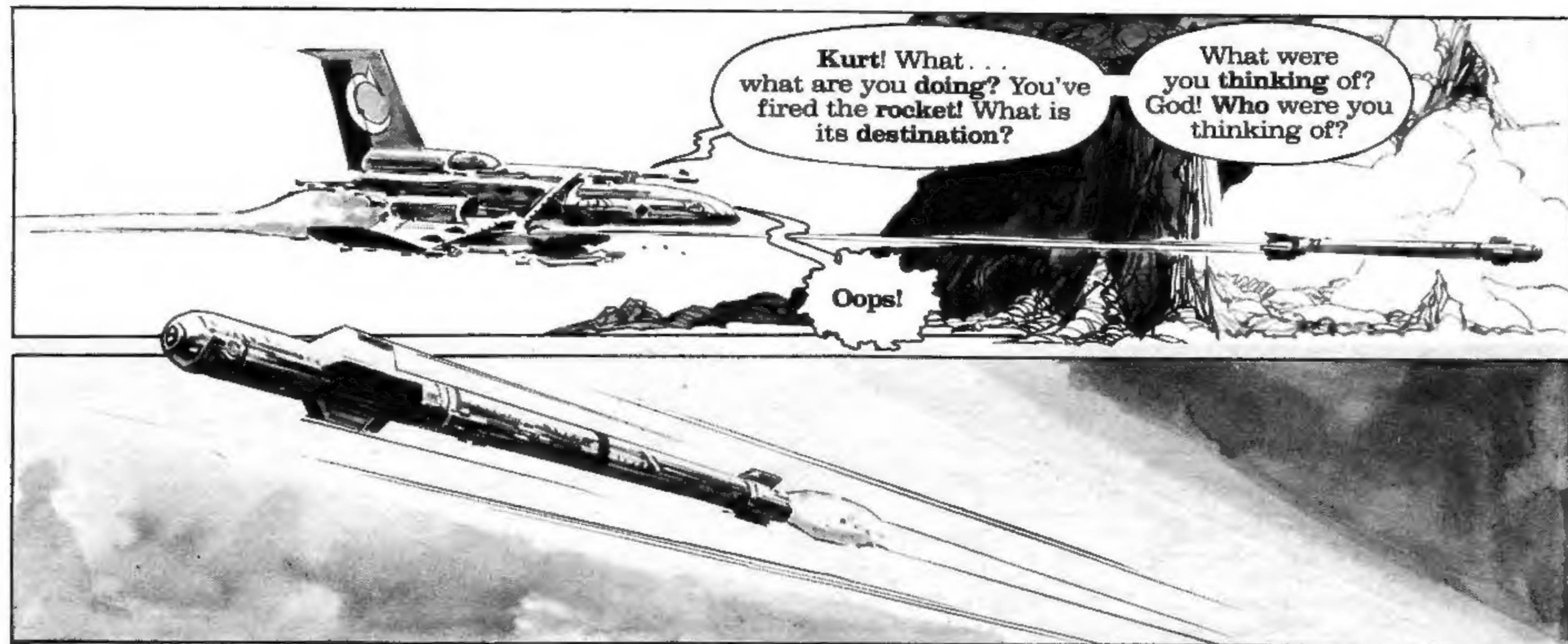
Easy, Kurt. The Alnarian mopped it up for us... and it's a good thing because you're delirious.

Relinquish the controls to me and I'll navigate us through, lover.



Th-that you, baby...? mission's over...! I... I miss you, honey.

Kurt! Relinquish control! Let me handle things, darling. I'll get you back and to a hospital. The Alnarians are on the run. Victory is ours... if you'll only let go!



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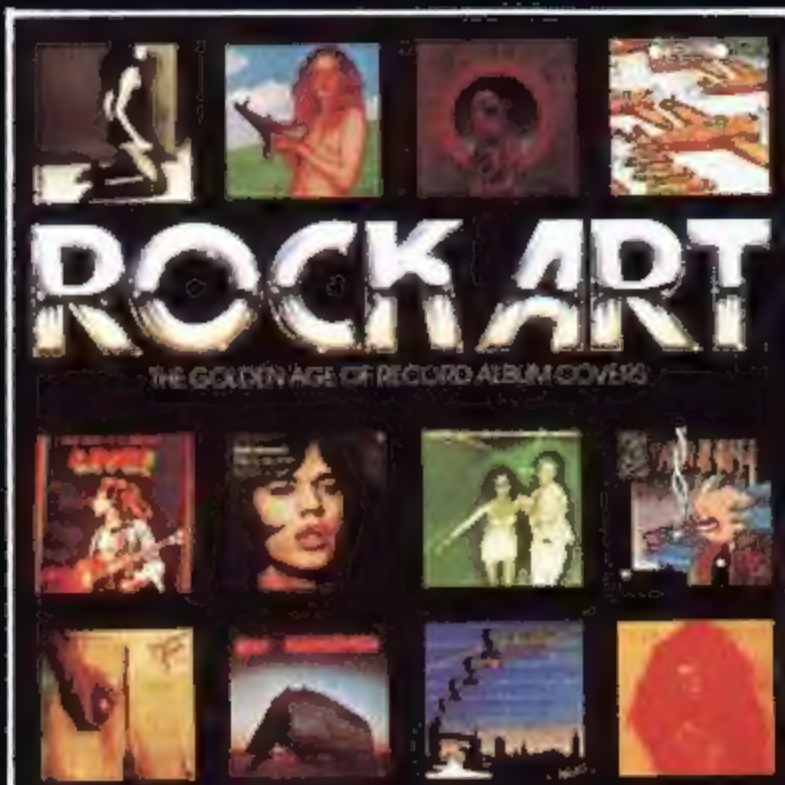
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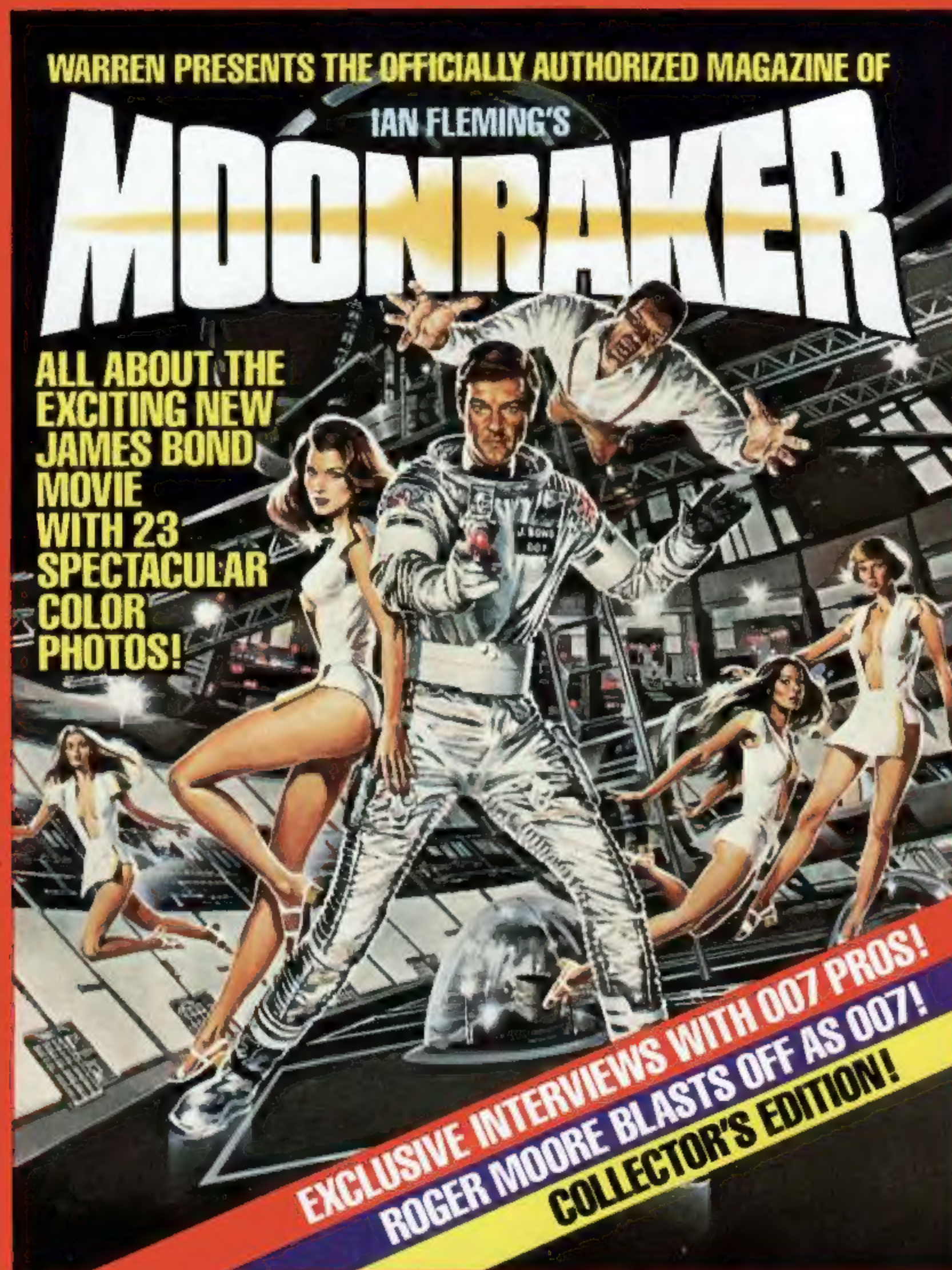
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